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ABSTRACT

This journal on writing instruction focusses on writing as a way of teaching social science. History, like science, needs to be taught as an evolving base of knowledge, rather than reverence for the way the story was told in the past. Integrating primary source materials with literature, both in language arts and social science, will help students to see how all history has a point of view and how language can convey meanings that far outweigh the sum of the individual words. Students will begin to discover that the standard history they have learned reflects the views of the dominant culture of the time. The document contains 15 articles, as well as regular departments and a book review. The first article, "Talking Back to Columbus: Teaching for Justice and Hope" (Bill Bigelow), describes teaching students to listen for the voices that are silent as well as those that are heard. He describes learning activities from history classes that teach about social activism and struggles for justice. Other articles describe educational software that is available to teach both writing and social studies. Two articles deal with family issues as subject matter for writing assignments in teaching social studies and an interactive project that enables students to explore history by constructing a family through a computer project. Other articles deal with teaching civil rights through multimedia, adding relevance to social science, and exploring the history of writing with young children. (DK)

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The Writing Notebook

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News from The Writing Notebook

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Designers' Forum Newsletter is a bimonthly publication for educational software designers, edited by Mary Cron and published by Visions for Learning. Designers throughout the educational community, including publishers, school districts, university departments, and independent developers will find the articles and information in this newsletter helpful to their current work as well as future development.

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Editorial
Sharon Franklin

Digging Deep

If you get nothing else from this issue of *The Writing Notebook*, I hope you will be thoroughly convinced that writing in social science can be much more than a report or term paper on a topic assigned by the teacher.

This issue is full of ways to make the study of social science come alive for students. It's often referred to as constructivist learning—letting students grab hold of a subject, any subject, in a way that allows them to create meaning. Even so, it's a big step to leave behind so much of how we learned "social studies" and to walk purposefully out into a vast wilderness with few landmarks to guide us.

Science as a discipline can provide a model. In science we continue to build on what we know; we aren't content to protect the beliefs of the past as though to believe differently diminishes or ridicules what went before. It is simply an evolving base of knowledge.

Why then, in the teaching of history, have we been content to let the story we *heard* be the story we *tell*, as though there's no point in discussing it further? Perhaps it's because uncovering the myths that have defined us, whether on a personal or collective level, is not without pain. There are risks in acknowledging the truths we find. My belief is that we can survive.

Integrating primary source materials with literature, both in language arts and social science, will help students to see how all history has a point of view and how language can convey meanings that far outweigh the sum of the individual words. Students will begin to discover that the "standard" history they've learned reflects the views of the dominant culture of the time. Knowing this, they can learn to listen, as Bill Bigelow says, for the voices that are silent as well as the voices that are heard. They will learn to search for truth in what may seem to be unlikely places.

Archaeology comes to mind, for to me this is what studying history should be like for students—a roll-up-your-sleeves, dig in, get a little dirty, and be-observant-to-what-you-find experience. Asking your own questions and celebrating disparate pieces of information that seem to not quite "fit." Slowly piecing together a mosaic of the history of an event, a people, or a period of time from many seemingly disjointed bits of information, sometimes forming conclusions and creating theories that are distinctly your own.

This intimate view of history, which includes the letters, journals, and personal accounts of ordinary people, reminds us that we *all* (not just "famous" people) create history. This honors our place in the world and reminds us that we can make choices about the history we create. Not a bad history lesson.

Talking Back to Columbus: Teaching for Justice and Hope

Bill Bigelow

"Of course, the writers of the books [that hide the truth or lie about Columbus] probably think it's harmless enough—what does it matter who discovered America, really, and besides it makes them feel good about America. But the thought that I have been lied to all my life about this, and who knows what else, really makes me angry."

Rebecca's written reaction to our class discussion of textbook accounts of Columbus's "discovery" of America hints that, in fact, the truth may not always set us free. Often it makes us angry—and that anger can all too easily become the breeding ground of cynicism and hopelessness.

The Columbus tale is near the top in the pantheon of myths shaping people's understandings about America and its history. In Portland, Oregon, where I teach, five- and six-year-olds enter kindergarten in September and by October they fingerpaint Columbus and crew, courtesy of the Holt Social Studies guidelines. When critical teachers encourage students to question this grandaddy of social myths, we need to anticipate some disillusionment. But what then?

Over the years, I've tried to find ways to tell the truth about history so that students leave feeling more hopeful and powerful than when we began. I aim to turn my classes into communities of resistance and courage, hope, and possibility; I encourage students to "talk back" to the history and to the history writers; I prompt students to give voice to the social groups silenced in the traditional curriculum; I highlight historical episodes of struggle for social change and try to draw those movements to the present day; I provide opportunities for students to see themselves as activists for justice; and I ask students to draw on their own lives as a source of hope and wisdom about resistance to injustice. These are lofty goals and I'd be less than honest if I didn't admit that results are always ambiguous.

Trying Out New Values

In *Annie John*, a novel by Jamaica Kincaid about a young black woman's coming of age on the Caribbean island of Antigua, Annie "talks back" to history by defacing her school book's chapter on Christopher Columbus. Annie dislikes Columbus, representing as he does the colonization of the West Indies and the initiation of the Atlantic slave trade. So in her textbook, under a picture of Columbus being transported in chains back to Spain during his third voyage, Annie writes in large letters: "The Great Man Can No Longer Just Get Up and Go."

It's probably not a good idea to encourage students to scribble critical commentary in the pages of history books like Annie did, but we can encourage them to write critiques of Columbus and his world view. In my U.S. history class, students read numerous excerpts from Native oratory and poetry which reveal a different way of viewing the living world than that of the European conquerors.

I ask students to talk back to the materialistic and exploitative values imported to the Americas by Columbus and those who followed. I provide a number of quotes students may respond to, though I never limit them to my suggestions: "Gold is a wonderful thing! Whoever owns it is lord of all he wants. With gold it is even possible to open for souls the way to paradise," Columbus wrote in a letter to Isabella and Ferdinand in 1503.[1] One student adopted the persona of a Plains Indian and wrote a stinging rebuttal to the kind of arrogance she saw in the Columbus quotation:

What is gold when the buffalo's thunder
is stilled, the earth no longer
drummed by mud-hard hooves?...
What is gold when grass turns
brown, when cold, cold wind blows ice
through tents and houses and there's no fur to bring warmth, no wood for fire, for all the trees have died?
With gold it is even possible to open for souls the way to paradise, but I say that way is death and gold the destroyer of life.

Giving Voice to the Tainos

Students might be encouraged to rearrange the assignment and complete it from the standpoint of Columbus. In his extraordinary book, *The Harp and the Shadow* (Mercury House, 1990), Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier writes from the perspective of Col-

umbus, alone on the verge of death, awaiting his confessor. Sometimes haughty and combative, sometimes probing and self critical, Carpentier's Columbus can be excerpted as a prompt for students' writing. In a death-bed interior monologue, Columbus thinks back to his first contact with the people he called Indians.

> *[They] wore small bits of gold in their noses. I said: GOLD. Seeing this marvel, I felt a sort of internal shock. A lust the likes of which I had never known rumbled in my gut. My hands trembled. Shaken, sweating, determined, crazed, peppering these men with sign-language questions, I tried to find out about the source of the gold, how they had obtained it, where it was found, how it was mined. . . .* (p. 84)

This excerpt and others provide alternative models of exploring indigenous perspectives and talking back to the silences. In a long illustrated poem, "Christopher's Fall From Grace," Jefferson High School student Rachel D. depicts the unequal dialogue between Columbus and the Tainos.

> *. . . No welcome can we give to you,*
> *our souls you cannot steal.*
> *You've taken all we have by force,*
> *as your fate you try to seal.*
> *We have no more gold, we have no more pride,*
> *We have no more carefree days.*
> *Too many we love are dead or gone*
> *and we fear there are more on the way.*
>
> *Salutations lowly slaves,*
> *I see you all look sad*
> *You'll join your friends if you find no gold or in any way make me mad.*
> *I've taken your loved ones back to Spain,*
> *to serve rich noble men.*
> *I need more gold or I'll make slaves,*
> *of all your kith and kin.*
>
> *Unwelcome is the mortal man,*
> *through heaven's pearly gates,*
> *who lies and steals and kills his own,*
> *with greed and lust and hate.*
> *You cannot harm us anymore,*
> *or use us for your gain.*
> *And long after your memory fades,*
> *our spirits will remain.*
> *You became an evil man,*
> *Amidst your lust for gold.*
> *But all the wealth within the world,*
> *won't save your tarnished soul.*

Rachel's Taíno Indians "resist" Columbus and crew by maintaining their humanity in the face of his kidnapping, slavery, and extortion. The last drawing accompanying her poem portrays Indians with their hands linked and thrust in the air, spiritually triumphant even in their extermination. That this resistance of the soul is the only fight the Taínos offer probably indicates that I didn't do an adequate job teaching the varieties of Caribbean Indians' flesh and blood struggles.

Standing Up For Justice: Learning From the Past

An important source of hope for students comes from learning about other people in history who, in the face of injustice, fought for what they thought was right. Our curriculum needs to feature movements for social justice—against slavery and imperialism, for workers' rights, for women's liberation—as well as individuals who joined and led these movements—Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, John Brown, Eugene Debs, Margaret Sanger, Cesar Chavez—so that the link between injustice and people's capacity to resist becomes for students a "habit of the mind." By de-emphasizing Indian resistance to Columbus and those who came after, I unintentionally encouraged students to view Indians as objects, passively awaiting their final fate at the hands of Columbus. The Indians in Rachel's poem thumb their noses at Columbus, but only as they die. Indeed, as the writings of Bartolome de las Casas and other contemporaneous chronicles record, many Indians did commit suicide, but the indigenous Caribbeans left a rich legacy of resistance that we should not neglect.

I try to bring struggles for justice up to the present, so as not to leave resistance to oppression back in history, lying there like a corpse.

From the very beginning of Europe's conquest of America, the Native Americans stood up for themselves and their comrades in myriad ways. On Monday, October 15, 1492, just three days after his arrival on Guanahani, Columbus writes in his journal that some of the people he had earlier kidnapped were attempting to mislead him in order to escape: ". . . all that [my captives] said was a ruse in order to get away."[2] And sure enough, that same day, two of the Indians he'd kidnapped threw themselves overboard and escaped with the help of other Indians in canoes that turned out to be faster than any boat the Spaniards had. Columbus's men searched for the escapees on a nearby island, but the Indians "all ran off like chickens," Columbus writes (Jane, p. 29). How cowardly, not to want to be slaves. But Indians don't just run away. They also attack, as the Spaniards begin to reveal the exploitation and brutality inherent in la empresa—the Enterprise. It seems the men Columbus left behind at La Navidad on Hispaniola formed "a gang that roved the island in search of more gold and women."[3] Later reports indicated that each of the Spaniards had taken four or five Indian women as concubines. The Indian cacique (leader), Caonabó, led a mission against members of the gang, killed them, and "promptly descended on Navidad with a strong force to wipe out the source of trouble." Caonabó's raiders attacked Spaniards in their camps, killing some and chasing others into the sea where they were drowned. "The others wandering about the interior were killed off by the Indians whom they had robbed or otherwise wronged" (Morison, p. 427).

Even in death, the Indians refused to bow to the will of the Spanish conquerors. In the first volume of his trilogy, *Memory of Fire* (Pantheon, 1985), Eduardo Galeano reconstructs the defiant conduct of Hatuey, an Indian cacique in the Guahaba region of

Hispaniola after his capture by the Spaniards. They tie him to a stake. Before lighting the fire that will reduce him to charcoal and ash, the priest promises him glory and eternal rest if he agrees to be baptized. Hatuey asks: "Are there Christians in that heaven?" "Yes." Hatuey chooses hell, and the firewood begins to crackle.

These and dozens of other instances of indigenous resistance can be shared with students—never to glorify violence, but to underscore people's capacity to stand up for what they believe is right even against tremendous odds.

Drawing Hope from Contemporary Resistance

I try to bring struggles for justice up to the present, so as not to leave resistance to oppression back in history, lying there like a corpse. A few years ago my teaching partner in a literature and history class, Linda Christensen, and I decided to acquaint students with the fight for Native American fishing rights on the Columbia River. David SoHappy and 12 other Native Americans recently had been arrested for poaching salmon, even though a treaty signed in 1855 granted Native Americans perpetual rights to fish at all the "usual and accustomed places"—as Native peoples along the Columbia had been doing for the last 12,000 years or more.

We read Craig Lesley's *Winterkill (Houghton-Mifflin, 1984)*, a novel about a Nez Perce man and his son, set along the Columbia, and articles about David SoHappy's struggle; we role played different social groups supporting and opposing the building of the Dalles Dam in 1957, a dam which violated Native treaty rights by drowning Celilo Falls, a sacred fishing ground and trading center; and by inviting a representative from the Columbia River Defense Committee to talk to the class. We also visited the museum at The Dalles Dam, heard a talk from the Army Corps of Engineers (builders of the dam), and hiked along the banks of the river where 3000-year-old Native pictographs peer down on the expanse of water below and Indians still fish from platforms fastened to the cliffs.

The museum is a house of propaganda for the Corps of Engineers. Indians are portrayed as ancient relics from a distant past, their artifacts displayed in glass cases, associated solely with archaeological digs. The exhibit texts' passive and muddy prose hides any human agency, any responsibility for who sabotaged the lives of river Indians: "As the region developed," "was established," "was launched," "until closing the Dalles Dam in 1957 flooded the rapids." The museumspeak acknowledges that changes occurred, but masks the choices that preceded these changes, and who made them or with what criteria. Linda and I encouraged students to take notes on the exhibits and through poetry and essay to write about the day. Rebecca wrote in part:

> *. . . You learn how a lifestyle*
> *can be bought and sold*
> *You learn you can picnic*
> *where ancestors of a culture*
> *were once buried*
> *And a white man's greed*
> *means more than a red man's*
> *survival...*
> *You learn to sit back*
> *and let progress progress*

Linda and I were proud parents of what had obviously been some powerful learning experiences for students. But in our class discussion to evaluate the study, Nikki said, "Why is it that we just kept talking *about* Indians, but we didn't actually get to meet any Indians? It couldn't be that hard to get on the phone and call Chief Johnny Jackson [of the Celilos] and see if he would come in to speak." Nikki was right. Inadvertently, we had replicated the textbook and museum discourse that talks about Native peoples in the third person—and in the process silences them and dumps them somewhere in the past. Without intending it, we reinforced the portrayal of Indian as Other, one of the very notions we so insistently criticized.

In the face of such overwhelming and continuing injustice, our students needed to meet people face to face who were working for change. Merely reading about these same people and movements unnecessarily distanced them from the hope that comes from hearing actual voices say, "I believe we can make a difference."

Students As Activists

Linda and I asked students to create a project that would reach beyond the walls of the classroom to educate others in the school or larger community. We worried that unless we offered students a chance to act on their new understandings, the unintended "hidden curriculum" would tell students that their role was merely to uncover injustice, not to do anything about it.

The form their projects took was up to them; the only requirement was for each individual or group to make a presentation to others outside the classroom. They took us at our word. One group of musicians produced a rock video about the damming of the Columbia River at The Dalles. Another group choreographed and performed a dance, both bitter and humorous, for other classes on Columbus's "discovery" and search for gold. Some students danced/acted, while another recited quotes from Columbus. Several students interviewed local Northwest Indian tribal leaders about their struggle over fishing rights on the Columbia. They produced a videotape subsequently broadcast over the school's closed-circuit TV news show.

One student wrote and illustrated a children's book, *Chris*. In Nicole's story, a young boy named Christopher moves from his old Spain Street neighborhood to a new house on Salvadora Street. He's miserable and misses terribly his old friends, Ferdie and Isie. While wandering the new neighborhood he spots a colorful playhouse and declares, "I claim this clubhouse in the name of me, and my best friends Fer-

die and Isie." The rightful owners of the clubhouse soon return and confront Christopher who insists that the structure is now his because he "discovered" it. "How can you come here and discover something that we built and really care about?" the boys demand. The story ends happily when they agree to let Christopher share the clubhouse if he helps with the upkeep —a metaphorical twist that would have been nice 500 years earlier.

Nicole read her story to children in a number of classes at a local elementary school. Like many other students, Nicole was angry she had been lied to about Columbus and the genocide of indigenous people in the Caribbean. However, the final project encouraged her to channel that anger in an activist direction. She became a teacher, offering the youngsters a framework in which to locate and question the romanticized textbook patter about "exploration" and "discovery," providing a hoped-for inoculation against the lies and omissions they will surely encounter later in their schooling. But as she was teaching she was also learning—learning that the best way to address injustice is to work for change.

Hearing Silent Voices

In a discussion about the U.S. media at the height of the Gulf War, one of my students, Sekou, said, "It's just like with Columbus. The textbooks all told the story from his point of view, from the winners' point of view. They called it a discovery instead of an invasion. The only story we get now is from the bombers' point of view. We hardly hear anything from the victims."

Sekou had begun to hear the silence. Our critical reading of textbooks and children's books, beginning with Columbus, is the first time most of my students are introduced to the idea that language takes sides. They see how books on Columbus and the "discovery" highlight certain ways of understanding reality and silence other perspectives. Thus, a number of students decided to give voice to what they imagined to be Native American perspectives in their children's books.

Tina and Kris wrote *The Untold Story*, recounting the tale of discovery from the point of view of the "discovered." They describe the pride of building a culture "from dirt and rock." Because their narrative doesn't sail breezily along with Columbus and crew, their description of the first encounter is unlike that in any commercially published book I've ever seen: "These people were not like us. Their skin was pink, their hair the color of sand, and their eyes the color of the open sea. They wore strange items that covered their bodies, even though it was very hot." When, after a period of time, her people are unable to fulfill Columbus's demands for gold, they "wondered what he planned to do next." Columbus takes slaves and kills many others. Unlike traditional stories of Columbus, Tina and Kris refuse to end their tale happily ever after: "We have little to show our children as proof of what happened to the Taínos. But we have our stories, told from generation to generation."

Working class children, children of color, young women—indeed, all students not born with silver spoons in their mouths—can begin to reclaim their own histories from the margins once they begin to read their books, their newspapers, their lives, for what is missing as well as for what is there.

In my classes, listening for "untold stories" begins with the Columbus tale, but is more than just the first chapter of a quest for historical accuracy. For Sekou, Tina, Kris, and others, learning to recognize that those in power privilege the voices of the powerful over the powerless is a basic skill. In most textbooks, in most movies, on most TV sets, the real-life struggles and accomplishments of the majority of people are as absent as the Taínos are from Columbus books. Working class children, children of color, young women—indeed, all students not born with silver spoons in their mouths—can begin to reclaim their own histories from the margins once they begin to read their books, their newspapers, their lives, for what is missing as well as for what is there.

Drawing Hope: A "Legacy of Defiance"

I want students to look at their own lives, so as to locate a personal "legacy of defiance" from which to draw hope —and wisdom. Linda and I ask students to think of times in their lives when they stood up for what they felt was right. It might be a time they felt compelled to physically confront a perpetrator of injustice or simply a time they "talked back" to someone in authority. To help prompt students' memories of resistance, we give examples from each of our lives—times we stood up to overbearing administrators, challenged friends who were treating someone unfairly, or demonstrated against unjust laws or policies.

After brainstorming and prodding each other's memories, students choose one incident of defiance or protest and write a story recounting the event. The next day students read their stories to the group, piecing together an inspiring patchwork quilt of caring and determination. As a kindergartner, Marnie implored her mother to remove her from a school where the teachers frequently beat students; Aashish joined a team protest to defy a rule requiring a minimum height for soccer players that discriminated against East Indians; Amanda challenged a friend who called a gay student a "fag"; Felicia refused her boyfriend's demand to prove her love by having his baby; Sara angrily confronted a group of girls who taunted

their Mexican classmates with racist comments.

One of our aims is for students to remind each other that, "Yeah, I'm the kind of person who stands up for myself, who believes in doing the right thing." And often during the read-arounds there is a palpable aura of dignity and solidarity that settles over the classroom. Our hope is to nurture the beginnings of this community of justice and courage, but we also see the read-arounds as building a collective text of student experience to be probed for deeper social meaning. As we saw from the Dominicans' experience on Hispaniola, righteous defiance is important but ultimately insufficient in actually achieving justice. At the same time we celebrate resistance, we should also evaluate it.

Linda and I ask students to take notes on each other's stories, to listen for:

1. What conditions allowed us to stand up for ourselves or others?
2. Was the resistance effective in rooting out the causes of injustice?
3. How were we changed by our acts of defiance?
4. What other patterns did we notice as we listened to the papers?

After our read-around, in which students call on each other to praise and comment on the stories, we ask them to write for a few minutes on the questions as preparation for discussion.

Some people, like Maryanne, notice that at times people fail to look for allies: "It was interesting to me that in most of these incidents people stood alone with the exception of Sonia," and also that "some of the ways in which we revolt end up doing more harm than good." Kurzel agreed: "It seems to me that most of the class stood alone and against people they knew, like Chrissy and her uncle, Millshane and her aunt, Rita and her teacher, me and my teacher. In some cases they should have stood as a people instead of their self, and as far as results nothing really happened." And Jeff noticed that "there were some cases where people tried to use anger, but could of done something else instead of using cuss words and their fist." Students' celebration of resistance is often tempered with the realization that the way we stand up for ourselves can be needlessly individualistic or violent. On the other hand, when I offered my opinion to one class that it didn't appear students' physical fights did much good, Kevin seemed to speak for the majority, saying, "Nah, that talking stuff don't work anymore."

While students begin to sense some of the limitations and contradictions of their actions, they almost always come away with a greater appreciation of their own capacities to make a difference, and with more respect for each other. Heather commented that "standing up showed these people they have power over their lives and power to protect themselves." Scott wrote that hearing people's stories "showed us that we can achieve things if we stand up for ourselves. We all felt better about ourselves." Keely noticed that even though people often stood alone, the experience was much more satisfying when they fought for change together:

> *I think people enjoy doing something together rather than alone. It seems in today's world people would rather accomplish some feat on their own. So they're the one on top. But I really believe when something is successful, it's better to have someone to celebrate with. When you do something alone it's like you are doing it for yourself, but when other people are involved, you did it for each other.*

Keely saw that the character of people's reactions to injustice was often determined by pressures in the larger society to make one's way individually, cut off from friends and community. But Christie understood the issue differently and underscored one's individual responsibility to confront wrongdoing: "I got out of this assignment that you have to be the one who stops the pain. If you don't say anything about your feelings people will always run over them."

The Columbus myth teaches children to accept racism as normal, to believe that powerful, rich, white, Christian countries have the right to dominate people of color in the Third World. It encourages people to listen for the perspectives of the winners, the social elites, and inures them to the historical and literary silences of everybody else. And it's a male myth of conquest: Leave women and community behind; encounter shortsighted or naive people; convert, trick or overpower them—just pursue your dream, preferably of wealth and fame.

No curricular task can be more important or challenging than encouraging students to deconstruct this extraordinarily powerful social myth. In numerous ways we can invite students to "talk back" to Columbus and all he symbolizes, ever vigilant to guard against anger becoming despair. Working to ensure that knowledge does not equal cynicism is no trivial pursuit. Our overriding concern must be to engage young people in activities that reveal their power to build a society of equality and justice. Children's hope is a fragile thing.

Bill Bigelow, Jefferson High School, Portland, OR.

Condensed with permission from "Talking Back to Columbus," a part of Rethinking Columbus, a special issue of Rethinking Schools, *1001 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212; ph. 414/964-9646.*

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Writing Depends on *Point of View*

Diann Boehm

Scholastic's *Point of View* software (*An Overview of United States History* and *The Civil War and Reconstruction*) makes history come alive for teachers and students. Scholastic has combined an excellent and easy-to-use database with a versatile authoring program and the option of multimedia. The result? —a product that can be used to achieve teaching objectives in history, research, computer literacy, and writing. The addition of the videodisc, *History in Motion*, available separately, turns the database into a multimedia tool for creating lessons and presentations.

A Dynamic Timeline

At the heart of the program is a dynamic timeline that acts as a visual graphic. This device makes it very easy, almost intuitive, for students to place particular time periods or topics into perspective. The program contains over 2000 "milestones," which span the history of the United States from 1754 to 1990. Each milestone chronicles a specific historical period, ranging from politics to social issues to the arts. Searching through and selecting "milestones" allows students to create their own timelines for a specific report. Clicking on an icon in the timeline gets a brief description—or an original essay about the event, historical document, picture, video clip, painting, or political cartoon. Maps, bar graphs, line graphs, and data tables reflect many different types of data, and all four visual displays are dynamic—the data displayed automatically changes as you move along the timeline. Students can see history passing before their eyes.

An Eighth Grade Report Using Point of View

One eighth grade student wanted to report on John F. Kennedy and the space race. She placed *History in Motion* into the laserdisc player and accessed POV Overview. She began by opening the "Find" file and had the computer search for all items relating to President John F. Kennedy. She previewed the information the computer found, including slides, audio-video segments, and documents, and recorded the information that she wanted to be able to use in her report so she could access it later through the database. Using the "Find" file again, she next entered the word "space" and accessed information from all media relating to that topic. Again, she made notes about the information she would use.

She then used the easy-to-use presentation tool to combine the relevant information from her search of items, including subfiles relating to science and technology, inventions, world events, politics, and United States events. In the process she began to link together documents, essays, speeches, maps, and charts. And as she used the authoring tool to add her own text, including material she obtained from more conventional sources, she began to see relationships among the information, all of which she combined into a multimedia presentation.

Scholastic has taken a solid database with excellent finding tools, added the pizzazz of multimedia, and integrated into the program an authoring application that allows students to stay in the program and write the text that weaves together data from the program and from other sources into one comprehensive report.

The report just described was part of a combined effort between eighth grade history teacher Jackie Donagan and myself. Jackie requires her students to prepare written reports that are presented orally to the class; in my computer class, eighth graders are required to create a multimedia presentation. In the process of combining these assignments, we agreed that students acquired in-depth knowledge about their subject. Not only that, they were enthusiastic about completing their research in a way we'd not seen before, and delivered high-quality multimedia presentations.

Point of View: Teacher Talk

POV's excellent database covers a wide range of topics, including daily life, diplomacy, education, immigration, intellectual life, judicial matters, labor, literature, arts, Native Americans, performing arts, reform and protest, religion, transportation, and war. These topics are presented using documents, slides, scanned images, audio and video segments, maps, and graphs.

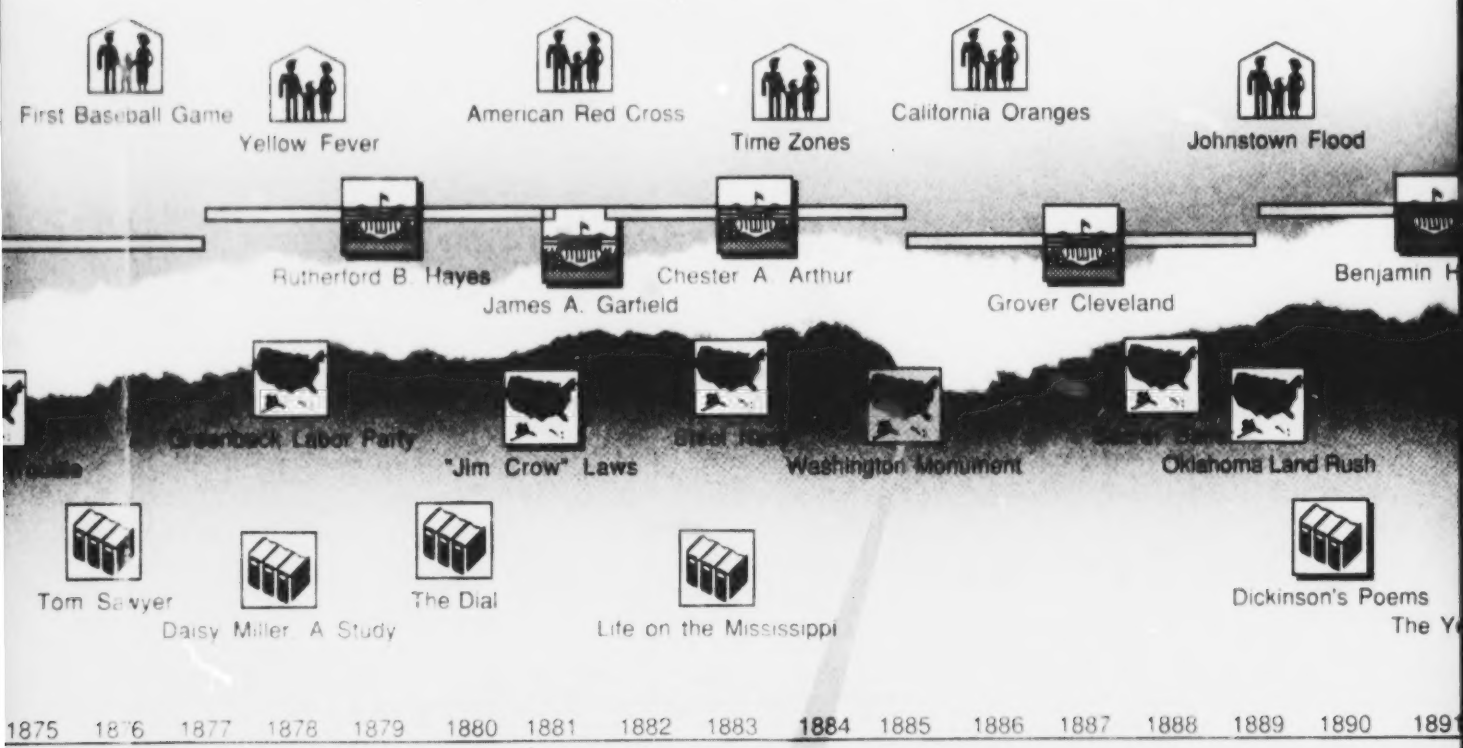
Point of View is easy to use. Our school offers computer literacy/application classes in all grades, beginning in first grade, and we experimented using POV with some fifth and sixth graders. They had no difficulty in accessing the database, finding relevant information, and making their own timelines to organize reports. The program's versatility allows it to be used alone or in combination with other resources to teach history, research, computer literacy, and writing. If you are a third grade teacher, you can use the program (including *History in Motion*) as a way to introduce multimedia. At other grade levels, the program's database features can be used to teach history and research skills.

The true genius behind *Point of View*, however, is the addition of the authoring tool to the database. Rather than being content with simply amassing a multimedia database for United States history, Scholastic has added the ability to stay in the program and write the text that weaves together data from the program and from other sources into one comprehensive report. The program is compelling for students; they are genuinely excited, and consequently they want to write.

The graphics are excellent. The timeline feature makes the program very "user friendly" and nonthreatening, and the icons used to identify topics are logical and easy to understand. Scholastic has combined a solid database with excellent finding tools, added the pizzazz of multimedia, and integrated into the program an authoring application. Together they make *Point of View* equally useful for the history teacher, English teacher, librarian/media specialist, or computer coordinator.

Diann Boehm, St. Andrews Episcopal School, 1112 W. 31st St., Austin, TX 78705.

Point of View requires a Mac Plus, SE, or II with at least one megabyte of memory and a hard disk. A videodisc player is optional but necessary for videodisc use. For more information, write Scholastic Software, 2931 E. McCarty St., PO Box 7502, Jefferson City, MO 65102-9968.



"I Don't Fit Anywhere and You Keep On Teaching": Building Relevance into the Social Science Curriculum

Part 1: Family Issues

Neil Van Steenbergen

How does the discipline of the social sciences connect with those students of mine who came to class the Monday after the Rodney King verdict, proudly showing off new shoes looted from burned buildings? What about those students from dysfunctional families? Those who face racism and stereotypes each day? Those who struggle with self-worth and see themselves as powerless? What's the relevancy of social science to them?

Social studies was always a bunch of traditional stuff to me as a student. History and more history. Books and chapters with questions at the end. Facts, figures, names, dates, statistics, impedimenta. Most of it ancient and archaic and certainly not relevant to me. As a high school social science teacher, I get to look at that dilemma. History *is* important. There is a context of facts and happenings within which to understand humankind and our journey.

There also is a necessary and legitimate cry for relevancy. Much of my joy in teaching comes from participating in the growth of students as they increasingly discover their own self-worth. For me, this deepening sense of personal power occurs within the framework of a large, urban, lower economic, and richly diverse southern California high school of 3200 students.

How does the discipline of the social sciences connect with those students of mine who came to class the Monday after the Rodney King verdict, proudly showing off new shoes looted from burned buildings? What about those students from dysfunctional families? Those who face racism and stereotypes each day? Those who struggle with self-worth and see themselves as powerless? What's the relevancy of social science to them?

Social science on any level, high school or not, can take many forms. History is not the only discipline—economics, sociology, psychology are also there. And for those who don't teach in those elective areas, there is infinite opportunity within the context

Getting Started

I don't begin these activities on Day 1 in the semester. It's important, however, to begin to build trust on the first day, to begin the process that allows for the safety that will support students as they explore themselves and others. That process involves trust, confidentiality, patience, listening, critical thinking, a willingness to speak and write from one's own place, respect, and the mutual establishment of ground rules:

- Everyone is worthwhile.
- Everyone deserves to be listened to respectfully—put-downs are not acceptable.
- Silence is okay and can speak volumes.
- Students can pass if they choose not to speak.
- It's also okay to struggle and stumble and be supported and to support others.
- And as the teacher, it's important for me as a member of the group to share myself and my process and not simply to play master puppeteer.
- Trusting the process is basic.

of the "traditional" social science disciplines to create writing and experiential-based activities that build in relevancy for students and to make these activities a part of the literature or historical period your students are studying. In the process there are many opportunities for you and your students to expand the use of technology, and especially multimedia.

In the next four issues of *The Writing Notebook*, I'll present ideas and activities in four areas that can help students see the relevancy of social science in their lives. This time we'll look at the Family; in November/December—Gender Issues; in January/February—Race; and in April/May—Violence/Conflict Resolution.

PART 1: FAMILY ISSUES

Why is a focus on "family" important? It is a typical point of departure in the primary social studies curriculum, but what about later on? For one thing, we all have families, and students, regardless of age, bring their family issues—past, present, and future—to class with them.

"Family" is also important as a national issue. The American family is under scrutiny. Divorce, domestic partners, blended families, changing structures, so-called "loss" of values —all of these topics are worthy of consideration. Issues related to families certainly appear throughout history and are widely reflected in literature. Reading and writing and talking about families helps students to see themselves as a part of history and a culture (and for many students, more than one).

One thing is certain: family structures vary widely and may be quite unnuclear. They may include nonrelated people and may exclude those related by blood. Helping students define what "family" means to them and others helps them to value rather than put down differences in families; they have a chance to discover their own identity, their own worth, their own uniqueness. And, as students learn to value themselves and to honor their own differentness, empowerment and increased self-esteem result, which makes it easier to value the diversity around them.

• A Letter to Your Parents

Ask students to write a letter to their parent(s). The letter need not be delivered; it can be written as a journal entry on computer. Encourage students to include the following: What really works well in your family? -not so well? What do *you* contribute to both the working and the not-working? What do you really think of your parent(s)? What do you imagine/know that they think of you? What would you like to change about your family? What are *you* willing to do to change your family? Listen carefully to the discussion coming from this letter. Share the letter that you wrote with your students.

Extensions—

- As a follow-up to writing about what works and what doesn't, have students survey their friends, family members, or other students in other schools via telecommunication, asking the same questions. Divide students into small groups to compile a data base of information gleaned from their surveys. Regardless of family structure, gender, ethnic group, or geographic area, are there certain things that seem to make families "work" and other things that don't? Writing and commenting on each other's assessments of this research helps students to look for patterns, for solutions—and to know that families share similar problems.
- Have students scan newspapers and magazines for family-related problems, including divorce, abandonment, day care, alcoholism, etc. How many of these problems are reflected in their data base? What issues in their data base are not reflected in the media? What might the reasons be?

• Gift-giving

As a follow-up to the letter-writing assignment and discussion, ask students to write about a gift, material or non-material, that they would like to give their parent(s). These gifts typically cover a wide range of objects or ideas—"a real house," a job, the ability to listen, money, forgiveness.

Extensions—

- Have students actually create that gift in some symbolic way, using objects, words, pictures, sound, or a combination, making it clear that the gift does not actually need to be given. The gift of listening, for example, might be accompanied graphically by a pair of open ears and a grateful heart. One of my students expressed her gift to her mother in poetry; another student wrote a song. Some students want to go further and "package" their gift in some way. When the gifts are created on the computer, other students may take the part of the parent and respond in writing to the gift. Have students think about books or movies that focus on unusual gifts and gift-giving—and feel free to share books such as *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox with students. Even though it's written for young children, it's a story for all ages.

• It's All in the Family

Judith Guest's book, *Ordinary People*, speaks to many family issues. Use this book to focus on communication problems in families. In Chapter 1, Con reflects on the sounds of his parents talking. "It doesn't matter. He doesn't need to hear, and they would certainly not be talking about anything important. They would not be talking, for instance, about him. They are people of good taste. They do not discuss

a problem in the presence of the problem. And besides, there is no problem."

Have students complete the following, first in their journals and then in discussion:

- Who in your life does not talk directly to you? With whom do you find it difficult to directly share important ideas?
- Script out a dialogue between you and that other person, including ideas and feelings that you think each person wants the other to hear.
- What is keeping each of you from doing that?

Extensions—

- **Family Sculpture:** To create a family sculpture, a volunteer describes his or her family and then picks students in the class to play those family members. A student is chosen to play the volunteer's role within the family as he/she becomes the sculptor. Students playing family members are placed by the sculptor around the room in places and in configurations that represent the relationships among family members. These students ask the sculptor clarifying questions about their role in the family and then act out a dialogue with each other. As a second part to this activity, the sculptor can choose to change the positions of people in the sculpture and direct any desired changes in dialogue. This gives students the freedom to experiment with how they would like things to be.

- **Enter the Political Arena**

Have students work in small groups to create a political platform for an upcoming election, spelling out issues related to families and suggested solutions to these problems. Have each group present their platform and be prepared to explain and defend it. Include in the discussion the nature of each social issue they identify—does it seem to be primarily an economic, cultural, political, or social problem?

Extensions—

It can be interesting for students to go back to their data base in light of the political platform they've created. What differences, if any, might this platform make in the identified family problems if turned into policy? Which problems seem mostly private and internal? -which ones could political or economic governmental policies impact?

Coming next time: Gender-related issues and activities.

Neil Van Steenbergen is nationally recognized for his teaching, workshops, and inservices in the area of human relations issues that include cultural diversity, gender issues, and peer mediation programs. He may be reached at Jordan High School, 6500 Atlantic Ave., Long Beach, CA 90805.

Tears Can't Tell My Story

Niggerboy echoes
my conscience.
"Thief" rings out with cold stares
as I browse through stores.
Tears can't tell my story.

"Gangster" grips people's lips
as I pull on my black jacket.
Chocolate amounts to brown creme
in this Vanilla world.
Tears can't tell my story.

Flashing 10's, 20's, sometimes 50's,
I'm a dope dealer.
Driving nice cars
brings extra police attention.
I hide behind my ebony mask,
trying to make a piano.
Tears can't tell my story.

—Jermaine Smith

Me Viêt Dâu?*

Baby plays behind rusty, red bars
While bamboo curtains enshroud her tiny cage.
Under Huê's forgotten graves,
Uncle Ho's broken rattle lies buried.
Her diapers sag with waste,
Yet no one changes it.
Her milk bottle lies empty beside her.
A few drops still cling to the bottom,
But those, too, are sucked dry by ants
in domed red starred hats.
Severing flesh like a cleaver,
Her teeth thrust forth in triumph.
Whimpers turn to cries,
Loneliness to frustration.
Father Russia is gone.
Me Viêt Dâu?

—*Tu Bui*

*Where is Mother Vietnam?

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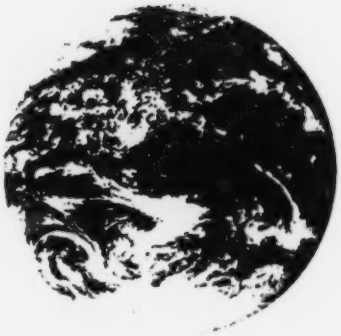

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PUTTING RIGHTS ON LINE FOR 21st CENTURY CITIZENS

Rose Reissman

In the process of research, debate, and writing, the original U.S. Constitution becomes a living document for these students—a document to be discussed, debated, and redefined.

Although middle school students occasionally become involved in national and regional rights controversies such as gun control, abortion, the death penalty, and environmental issues, this initial involvement rarely translates into an in-depth study of the rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. However, by using the computer to support student investigation of constitutional issues, they can go beyond an initial probe of a controversy to serious constitutional research and debate. I call this strategy "Putting Rights On Line For 21st Century Citizens."

First, I divide students into teams of two to three. Each team is posted at a computer station with their own copy of the Bill of Rights to review. As their first task they redraft the eighteenth century phrasing into easily understandable language. Teams are given 20 to 30 minutes for this task. They have access to a dictionary as well as my assistance. One team member is designated as the recorder to transcribe notes and ideas developed by team members.

Students at J. H. S. 168 were asked to draft legislative proposals for the N.Y. State Assembly. They formulated these using standard legislative language:

"BE IT RESOLVED that citizens have the right to die with dignity and to refuse hospitalization, surgical treatment, or extraordinary medical procedures that merely prolong dying."

"BE IT RESOLVED that mandatory blood testing for AIDS or other infectious diseases should be permitted only when there is an overriding public health reason for such testing."

"BE IT RESOLVED that the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution be ratified to insure equal pay for equal work, to provide equal opportunity for all Americans and to prohibit the exclusion of women from professional, political and economic organizations."

Once students have a first draft, they are given a chance to enter comments on at least two other computer station files. This process usually takes up the rest of the project period as well as 10 minutes of the second project period.

When comments on the initial files have been completed, each team returns to their station to modify their writing. Once they are satisfied, the drafts are printed out and posted.

Next, students are asked to travel forward in time from 1791 to the present. They review their drafts to decide which if any of the amendments are outmoded and need to be deleted and/or which of the amendments require substantial modification to meet current constituencies' needs not anticipated by the 18th century drafters. As a catalyst for classroom analysis, we list groups of people and concerns not included or anticipated by the founding fathers. These might include women, the environment, racial and religious minorities, children, the homeless, animals, babies, etc.

Teams are given a full period for their twenty-first century citizens rights review. When they have modified the rights to their satisfaction, each team presents their rights updates to the whole class. All suggestions are entered on a separate file by a class "town meeting" moderator. Suggested revisions are printed out for everyone. The students take the printouts home and are given a week to contact at least five adult citizens and get their responses to the drafts.

After the community survey, students enter the results on their individual files and record their own responses.

Finally a town meeting is held in which the teams vote on each of the suggested revisions. Tallies of the vote are recorded by the class "drafter." The minutes of the meeting and the tallies as well as a draft of the accepted revisions are printed out for the town assembly (the class).

As an outgrowth and an extension of this study, these middle school students modified their initial computer lab analysis of the Bill of Rights to meet the needs of the grade 4-6 students they work with as peer teachers. They shared their own rights rephrasings with these classes and asked the younger students to write their reactions to the amendments. In addition, they encouraged the younger students to find examples involving Bill of Rights issues in news stories.

—continued on p. 46

The Civil Rights Movement via Multimedia

Norma Mota-Altman

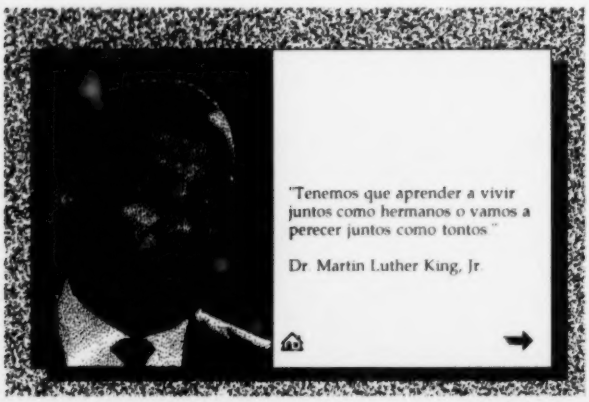
Who was Martin Luther King?"

"Martin Luther King? You don't know who Dr. Martin Luther King was?" I could hardly keep the disbelief from my voice. "Have you heard of the civil rights movement?"

"Wasn't he a black guy who fought for blacks' rights?"

"He had something to do with the KKK, didn't he?"

After a few more comments that alternately reassured me and appalled me regarding my 7th and 8th grade students' knowledge of the civil rights movement, I discussed Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his role in the civil rights movement in the United States.



As a teacher I came away shaken from this experience. Don't most teachers discuss this? Isn't the civil rights movement covered every year in light of the Martin Luther King holiday? Obviously, although students may hear facts every so often, they clearly do not necessarily internalize these facts or make the knowledge their own. How could I help them do this? How could I make learning about Dr. King and the civil rights movement a life experience that students would keep with them?

I decided to create a HyperCard stack on the civil rights movement that would combine text and video clips. The laserdisc I had in my possession, "King: Montgomery to Memphis," would help. I had four major objectives. I wanted to make the issue of civil rights come alive for students; I wanted my students to use technology as a tool to achieve that goal; I wanted to help students reflect on the period through writing prompts; and I wanted subject-matter integration that would encompass social studies, language arts, and literature through the use of core literature books.

I quickly reviewed my "credentials" for such an undertaking: I had taken three (yes, three!) courses on HyperCard and had attended the Macintosh Multimedia Institute led by California Literature Project teachers at the L.A. County Office of Education. An enormous project, I realized. Could I accomplish my goals? Where would I start?

I started by planning my stack as I would a lesson:

- What did my students need to know before they could make sense of the civil rights movement?
- Did they need a prewriting activity?
- What pictures could I scan to make my stack more interesting?

I combined what I knew about technology, "into, through, and beyond literature" techniques, and good teaching strategies. I realized that I needed more information about the period, which led me to the library and my own research on the subject. I watched the laserdisc and made notes of the film clips I wanted to include in my stack. And I continually went back to my original question: What was my purpose in creating this stack? Would it work best as a literature-based stack or a social studies stack? Was my primary purpose to have students read a core literature book about the civil rights movement and react to it, or was my purpose to help students gain a greater understanding of Dr. King and his role in a movement that affected all Americans?

Creating the Stack

Once I had settled these questions in my mind, I felt I was ready to begin. I sat down with paper and pencil and sketched out the information that each card in the stack

Writing Prompts From the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Stack

- Brainstorm and write an essay on what this quote might mean:

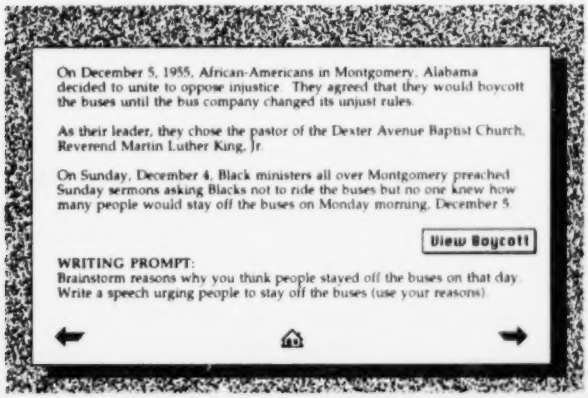
  "There comes a time when people stop thinking about what's happened to them and they start thinking about what they can do to make their lives better."

- Listen to Dr. King's words in the speech he delivered the night before the boycott. Write a letter listing what Dr. King and the protestors were asking of the people of Montgomery.

- Think about the quote, "Hate begets hate; violence begets violence; toughness begets a greater toughness." Write a poem on the theme of nonviolence.

would contain. I decided where to insert film clips and where I would place scanned images.

And then I sat down at my Mac LC computer and created the stack. It took only a few hours to make the stack because I had planned everything in advance. It was easy! After the stack looked the way I wanted, I took the disk to the school lab where I could work simultaneously on two computers and translated the stack into Spanish for my Spanish-speaking students. Now, I was ready for the big test—my students.


On December 5, 1955, African-Americans in Montgomery, Alabama decided to unite to oppose injustice. They agreed that they would boycott the buses until the bus company changed its unjust rules.
As their leader, they chose the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.
On Sunday, December 4, Black ministers all over Montgomery preached Sunday sermons asking Blacks not to ride the buses but no one knew how many people would stay off the buses on Monday morning, December 5.
View Boycott
WRITING PROMPT:
Brainstorm reasons why you think people stayed off the buses on that day. Write a speech urging people to stay off the buses (use your reasons).

Since my students were working on their own HyperCard projects, I told them about my HyperCard project and how I could access laserdisc clips in my stack—a technology that I hoped to share with them in creating their next stack. I told them that my stack was meant to be a "teaching" stack—a stack that would help them to better understand Dr. King and his role in the civil rights movement. I demonstrated parts of the stack with the whole class using Kodak's *Datashow* and an overhead projector. I then set up the stack on a computer in the back of the room where students could work through it with a partner. I asked the students to help me make my stack better by evaluating what they found difficult or unclear as well as what they enjoyed about the process.

Most students agreed that it was difficult to understand Dr. King "until you got used to him," so they liked being able to play the film clips as often as they wanted. Having a partner also helped, because they could ask each other "what they thought he said." Students also enjoyed being able to discuss the writing prompts with someone before they actually started writing. More than anything, they enjoyed being able to move through the material at their own pace and to go back and forth through the stack.

As a teacher, it felt good to relate to my students as a peer. I enjoyed getting their input and exchanging ideas on how to make my stack better. They offered suggestions hesitantly at first, but soon we were all learning from each other. Technology is a wonderful tool, not only for teaching and learning but also for equalizing roles in the classroom.

I don't know yet if my stack will prove to be a great teaching tool for my students in learning about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement. I hope it will be. I know that creating the project was a great experience for me. In putting myself in the role of my students in learning something new, I was reminded of the joy, the frustration, and ultimately, the pride that comes with doing something that you previously thought was beyond your ability.

Norma Mota-Altman, Emery Park Model Technology School, 2821 Commonwealth Ave., Alhambra, CA 91803.

Model Citizens

We see commercials,
Sad, sickly children from third-world countries
Flash onto sixteen inch screens.
Petals of childhood cling
To their small skeletons.
Eyes like mirrors reflect
Sorrow, starvation, and the hope of salvation.

"Withered blossoms, we will help you.
We will give seventy cents a day."

Soldiers march to and fro,
Displaying graphic pictures—
Hamsters swollen like balloons,
Cats missing tufts of hair,
And dogs awaiting deadly injections.

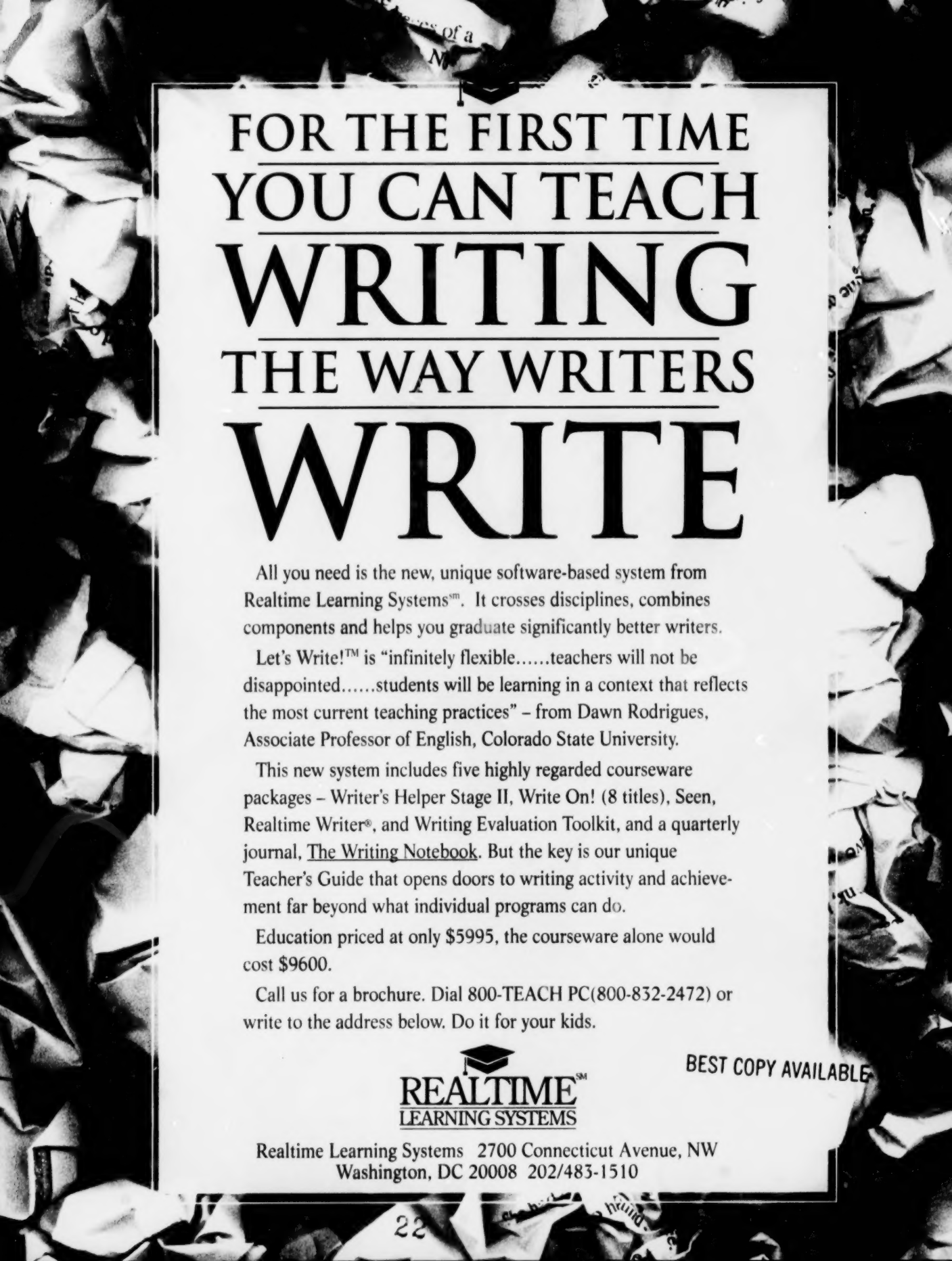
Our indignation shouts,
"Stop torturing animals!"
We see the protest marchers.

Greedily absorbing rain forces
Cardboard walls to collapse,
Leaving mother and child
Homeless again.

Our animosity screams,
"Get a job!"
We are blind.

—*Natalie D. Emery*

Reprinted with permission from Jordan High School's literary art magazine, **Stylus,** *Volume 18, 1992. Special thanks to Marie Tollstrup and these wonderful poets from her creative writing classes. Jordan High School, 6500 Atlantic Ave., Long Beach, CA 90805.*



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Electronic Debate

Chris Clark

This year, like many others, has been filled with debate and controversy. Heated discussions on the environment took place at the Rio summit. There were battles, both psychological and physical, between pro-choice and pro-life factions. People even argued about which athletes should be allowed to compete for spots on Olympic teams. And, in an event that does not take place every year, 1992 also will feature a series of formal political debates, when candidates for the office of President and Vice President of the United States face off this fall on national television.

As a result, many students and teachers will want to try their own debates. Unfortunately, schools are likely to be daunted by the necessary formalities, expense, and travel hassles that are a part of arranging face-to-face debates with other schools. Technology provides another option. This article describes how, with the aid of a computer and modem, students in two schools can carry out a modified formal debate from their classrooms.

The Traditional Debate

A debate centers around a formal-sounding sentence, called a proposition, which often reads like this: "Resolved, that so-and-so should do such-and-such." In a formal debate there are two sides: the affirmative, which agrees with the proposition, and the negative, which disagrees. It is the job of each side to build a case in support of its viewpoint and to refute the case of the other side. The first step in building a case is for each group to identify issues related to the proposition. The groups then identify arguments associated with each issue and gather evidence to support their arguments.

In a traditional face-to-face debate, there are live oral speeches. Teams are allowed a limited amount of time to prepare their cases and their speeches, and judging is done on site the day of the debate.

The Electronic Debate

As part of a project developed on the Learning Link telecomputing network, the children's current events program, "What's in the News," piloted a technique called "electronic debate." In this kind of debate, all communication is done over phone lines using telecomputing. Instead of oral speeches given face-to-face, teams produce written speeches and exchange them via electronic mail. Limits are placed on the number of words per speech and the number of days available for writing and research. And, in a significant break from a formal debate, identities are kept secret until after the debate. This adds a feeling of mystery to the process and keeps petty interschool rivalry out of the picture.

Key Participants

In order to run one of these debates, two classes of students (they can be as young as fourth or fifth grade) and their teachers must first agree to participate actively in the project. In this case, it really does "take two," although actually a third party is also very important—the debate coordinator. This person should be impartial and very familiar with the telecomputing medium. The coordinator formulates and announces the proposition, assigns affirmative and negative sides, and relays speeches between the two debate sites. After all the speeches have been written and exchanged, the coordinator announces the team identities and manages the evaluation process.

Here is a sample of both classes' comments to each other:

I'm glad I got to take part in this.
I liked your speeches and I hope we have a chance to meet!
I hope to get to write back and forth with one of you.
It was more fun than I expected it to be—and challenging, too.

Outside resource people are very helpful in an electronic debate. They can help classes understand how a debate is conducted and provide information and background on the content of the debate. The coordinator also will need to enlist the help of two or more evaluators. At least one of them should be knowledgeable in the content area and another should be familiar with debating.

Hardware and Software

The equipment needed to send electronic mail is available in most school districts. Virtually any kind of computer will work, as long as it has a compatible modem with the necessary interface and cabling. Access to a phone line is required, but it need not be a dedicated line. Communication software is also readily available, and schools can use any telecommunication network that provides electronic mail such as Learning Link, FrEdMail, AppleLink, Com-

puServe, AT&T Mail, or America Online. If the schools use different networks, they may be able to exchange mail through the Internet.

Before the Debate

First, the teacher and the coordinator need to get together and decide to do the project. Next, the coordinator will need to locate a partner school. If she has access to CompuServe, she might post an invitation in the Education Forum.

Next, the two classes need to decide whether a winner will be declared. In addition, both teachers should send the coordinator a list of possible topics that fit into their curriculum. From those lists the coordinator will select an area and frame the proposition. Before the proposition is mailed out, though, classes should try to learn about debating and become familiar with debate evaluation criteria.

During the Debate

Day 1: Topic received.

As soon as the proposition is received via electronic mail, students begin to research both sides. A number of helpful resources can be found within the school district, including the library, technology support people, social studies and English teachers, and maybe even a debate team. Community groups may also be helpful, including the League of Women Voters, Toastmasters, National Issues Forums, political parties, and the local university or college. The news media are also important sources of information.

Day 4: Sides assigned.

By this time, data has been collected and the classes are ready to work on their first writing—the constructive speech, which is limited to 600 words. In it students should define important terms, identify key issues, and begin to outline their case. The speech is composed on a word processor, and when it is finished it is sent by electronic mail to the debate coordinator. The next day, the students receive the first speech from the anonymous class on the other side.

Day 6: Constructive speech sent to coordinator.

Day 7: Opposing speech received.

Students now begin work on the second speech—the rebuttal. Again, it is limited to 600 words. This time, the purpose is to point out differences with the other side and to begin to refute the opposition's arguments. New evidence may also be given.

Day 11: Rebuttal sent.

Day 12: Opposing speech received.

Finally, students begin to work on their closing speech, which is limited to 300 words. No new positions may be presented here. The idea is to summarize and compare cases with the opposition.

Day 15: Speech 3 sent.

Day 16: Opposing speech received and other side identified.

After the last speech has been sent to the coordinator, she is responsible for sending copies of all the material to the evaluators. Evaluation criteria include observing deadlines and length limits, following content guidelines, sticking to substance, responding to opposing points, not debating evidence, and avoiding jargon.

Day 20: Evaluations received.

A winner is declared only if requested by BOTH sides before the debate begins. The decision on a winner is based on evaluation criteria only.

Any good educational activity involves follow-up. Students may want to write to each other in a more personal way now, perhaps introducing themselves. They also have an opportunity now to exchange comments on the issue and the process. Later they may wish to discuss the feedback they receive from the evaluators.

Conclusion

A debate forces one to look at an issue objectively, rather than emotionally. One is assigned a point of view, rather than choosing it. This is a valuable learning experience for learners of all ages, and it can bring an issue to life.

An electronic debate should not be seen as replacing a live debate. It is, rather, an alternative that may prove easier and less expensive than travel to a debate site. For students who have difficulty with oral presentation, electronic debate gives them an opportunity to participate without the pressures of face-to-face competition. It allows students practice with the structure of debate as a form of communication. And last, the telecomputing medium provides an inexpensive method for bringing students into contact with peers having very different perspectives. Imagine debating women's rights with Arab children or environmental issues with a class in Brazil.

Chris Clark, Director of Educational Technology, Culver Academies, Culver, IN; AppleLink: GCClark. Internet: IBTH100@IndyVax.IUPUI.Edu.

For information on Learning Link, contact Learning Link Customer Service Dept., 1400 E. Touhy Ave., Suite 200, Des Plaines, IL 60018; ph. 708/390-8700. To learn how to receive What's In The News, contact International Telecommunications Services, PO Box 1290, State College, PA 16804; ph. 703/476-4468.

The author wishes to acknowledge and thank the students in Johnstown and Lock Haven; teachers Patricia Marshall and Jane Coffey; evaluators Erica Axelrod, Kathy McCormick, and Maria Leavey; Dale Stough of the Pennsylvania Public TV Network, and Radio Shack dealer Jim Reese.

Proposition: "RESOLVED, that United States citizens should not stage protests in times of war."

First Constructive Speech: Affirmative

The United States government . . . should have special powers during times of armed conflict with another nation. At the head of this list should be the right to prevent anyone living within its borders from demonstrations or protest rallies. . . . A country which is engaged in a war will have to go through many hardships. . . . Protests eat away at the armor of the country. They attack the foundation which keeps the war effort going.

One of the most destructive effects of protesting is the demoralizing effect on military personnel, their families and friends. . . . The message protestors send the the military forces is, you are wrong. Your country does not support you. Your cause is unjust. . . . Protests, during time of war, give an important advantage to the enemy. Protests divide a country and its citizens when a united effort is most needed. . . . An example was Saddam Hussein thanking American protestors for supporting the just cause of the Iraqi people. . . .

First Constructive Speech: Negative

A protest is a formal objection or declaration to attract attention to what they consider unjust or unconstitutional laws or policies. . . . When people protest, it is not just in times of war. They protest for many other important causes. . . . To make a law forbidding the right to protest is a clear violation of the first amendment of the United States Constitution. . . .

As a United States citizen, anyone can protest any place and anytime, legally.

. . . Protests in a time of war also gives people an opportunity to show their love, support, and best wishes. In modern ages the war's more technological, nuclear and chemical warfare can do much harm and protests could possibly help, change, or prevent that. . . . The idea of protesting and demonstrating is one of the freedoms of the general public. In order to have a free democratic society, voices shouldn't be suppressed by the government.

Second Constructive Speech: Affirmative

. . . Laws as far back as the "Sedition of 1798," the "Espionage Act of 1917" and the "Alien and Sedition Act of 1940" have made protesting illegal.

Recent examples of troop reaction to protests during the Vietnam and Persian Gulf War also show that it is bad for morale and the war effort. . . . Protests may have been going on for many years, but . . . in the Supreme Court case of *Marsh vs. Alabama*, the court restricted free speech on private property. . . . Freedom of speech is not an absolute right and never was intended to be so. . . . It is limited by the rights of others, national security, and public decency.

. . . Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, "When a nation is at war many things that may be said in peace are such a hindrance to its effort that their utterance will not be endured so long as men fight."

Second Constructive Speech: Negative

Although some points in your speech are well taken, in this country these points have no validity. . . . Here we have the freedom of speech, which enables us to openly express our opinions anywhere, at any time, by means of demonstrations, protests, or rallies. . . . The government represents our country, and the only way we can let them know our opinions about certain situations is by a vote or protest. . . .

The opposition states that staging protests may depress soldiers overseas, but the protests can also show them that we care about them and feel that instead of having them lose their lives on the battlefield, we think that the problem should be worked out peacefully . . . elected officials would see how many citizens are against the conflict, and feel pressure to bring the war to an end quickly. . . . the government should not be permitted to take away our Constitutional rights. . . .

Rebuttal: Affirmative

The negative position is praiseworthy but unrealistic. No democracy has unlimited freedoms. . . . The government . . . wants to guarantee that all citizens have rights, not just those who can shout the loudest. . . . Voting is the best way to voice those opinions.

The idea that any military personnel would find protests a morale booster is unheard of. . . . Unfortunately, those who start wars are more interested in winning than peace. . . . No reasonable citizen would feel that protests during times of war are patriotic or morale building. . . . The federal government, in times of war, does have power to limit the rights of the people in the interest of national security. . . .

Rebuttal: Negative

. . . Freedom of speech is an absolute right and is intended to be so. We are protesting legally and without treason. Also, protesting can let the people overseas know that we support them. . . . It is not unpatriotic to protest because it shows that the citizens do not want human beings wounded or killed. . . . Protesting with words or marching should not be illegal. It is not hurting anyone or violating any laws. Public violence is against the law, but most protests are nonviolent.

Evaluators' comments are summarized below:

"The negative side took a difficult stand and made some thoughtful points. They did well in citing the First Amendment, but ran into trouble basing arguments on an absolutist reading. Slander is illegal, for example. Unpopular speech is protected, and war protest is not obviously dangerous, like shouting 'fire!' in a crowded theater. They did not explain how protest shows support for the troops. Speech 2 made good points about immigrants wanting freedom and about voicing opinions, but the conclusion was weak.

"The affirmative side was well-argued, but skirted the issue of diminishing rights. Some of the evidence is misused (the acts cited have been repealed) and should have been refuted. The Holmes quote was good. They presented more evidence than the other side, but could have done a better job of refuting the negative. The "glue which will hold the nation together" is good. They make a good point about the rights of all versus the rights of loudest. In Speech 3, the phrase 'reasonable citizen' is a value judgment."

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS Telecomputing Project

ELECTRONIC DEBATE EVALUATION

PROPOSITION: "RESOLVED, that United States citizens should not stage protests in times of war."

Spch.	RULES Max Length	Deadline	AFFIRMATIVE Length	Date	NEGATIVE Length	Date
1	600	2/04				
2	600	2/08				
3	300	2/13				

First (Constructive) Speech	AFFIRMATIVE	NEGATIVE
Defines terms		
Presents issues		
Outlines case		
Second (Constructive) Speech	**AFFIRMATIVE**	**NEGATIVE**
Outlines differences		
Refutes opposition		
Continues building case		
Third (Rebuttal) Speech	**AFFIRMATIVE**	**NEGATIVE**
No new positions		
Continues refuting		
Compares cases		
Summarizes		

OVERALL EVALUATION	AFFIRMATIVE	NEGATIVE
Convincing arguments		
Compelling evidence		
Responds to opposition		
Opinions of authorities		
Evidence is not debated		
Sticks to substance		
Outsiders can understand		

Comments (below and on the back):

Jostens Learning: Write for Tomorrow

Susan Ludwig

Get it down. Take chances. It may be bad, but it is the only way you can do anything really good.
—William Faulkner

In the past, we didn't teach writing; we assigned it and then corrected it. The emphasis was on the final product. For the most part, learning to write consisted of filling in the blanks on endless worksheets, copying the answer to a question from a textbook, categorizing written samples, or responding in one of two discourse modes—the essay or the report—with little instruction other than the goal of a specified length of "at least two pages." Such assignments failed because they:

- Did not explore the range of writing forms available to the student.
- Supplied little assistance to the writer regarding the process of writing.
- Were not relevant to the adolescent's interests or concerns.
- Resulted in evaluation of the mechanics rather than content (i.e., "red pencil" assessment).

As Lucy McCormick Calkins[1] acknowledges, it is misleading to "elevate form over content." Writers do not sit down to write a "three paragraph persuasive essay," but rather to say something: "to convince people. . . , to describe in depth. . . , or to explore the relationship between. . . ."

Language arts programs, particularly for adolescents, cannot afford to focus on traditional areas of importance: academically accepted literature that has no relevance to their lives; skill-based lessons that require memorization of discrete and ever-changing sets of rules; writing assignments that require the use of tiresome formulas and produce similarly mediocre products; classroom assignments that require, and perhaps even foster, lower order thinking skills and little or no creativity.

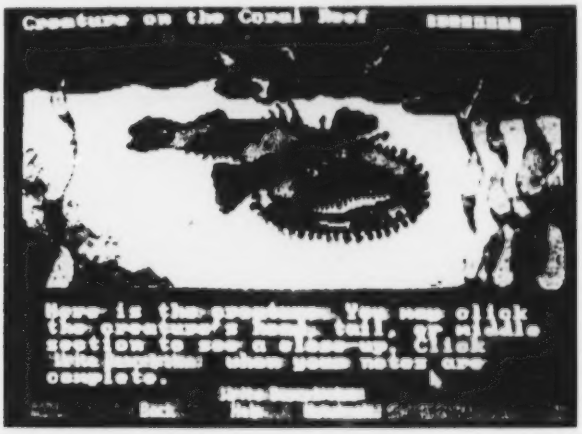
Find out what gave you the emotion,
what the action was that
gave you the excitement.
Then write it down making it so clear that
. . . it can become a part of the experience
of the person who reads it.
—Ernest Hemingway

At Jostens Learning, we believe that teaching writing involves not only telling students *not* to write, but in creating situations where they want to write and want to write well. Students are encouraged to use language in meaningful contexts. That is, reading, writing, and thinking are presented as complementary, integrated literacy skills.

The **JL Writing Program** integrates reading, writing, and thinking instruction in realistic literacy tasks, using real-life experiences and everyday applications. Lessons are drawn from the sciences and humanities as well as from life skills. Each lesson provides an off-line reading task to help students collect ideas and organize their thinking before going to work at the computer. At the computer, the students participate actively as char-

"Writing Directions"—The JL Writing Program incorporates realistic literacy tasks.

acters in a simulation that relies heavily on full-color graphics and re-enacts a realistic literacy situation: promoting a business doing lawn work, persuading parents to give their consent for a trip, describing a creature seen underwater, or evaluating possible sites for a school outing. Also provided are model compositions on-line, reminders of the task at hand, and additional tricks of the writers' trade—always customized to the current writing project.

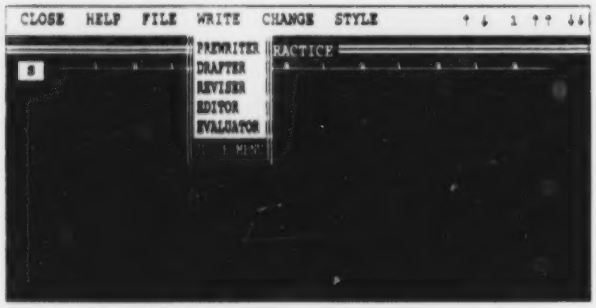


"Underwater Creature"—Students build an extensive vocabulary.

Utilizing the Notepad and the Writing Processor, students hone skills in the *process* of writing. In the Notepad, students take notes on the simulation, and the role they have assumed, retrieve information needed from documents read on-line, reflect on the intended audience, and begin to develop the writing task they have selected.

Once students have the information they need to address the literacy task, they are routed to the Writing Processor. There they shape their notes into a realistic format such as a report, campaign speech, thank you letter, or an advertising flier. Thus, students are exposed to different kinds of writing—informative, persuasive, narrative, and imaginative—used in situations common to their daily experiences.

The Writing Processor is more than just a word processor—it prompts students through the five-step writing process, offering built-in assistance for prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing with handy pull-down menus.



"Writing Processor Menu"—Students are guided in the five-step writing process.

Jostens writing programs will continue to take full advantage of the characteristics of young adolescents, putting their wonderful intellectual curiosity to work with activities that engage their problem-solving capabilities and call on their opinions and experiences.

Jostens Learning captures the spirit of the middle school philosophy that embraces curriculum integration and student involvement. The more students write, the more likely they are to have developed their imaginations and the more likely they are to make choices and invent their own assignments. So much the better, we think.

Student decision making involves them fully in the learning process, capitalizes on individual interests, and provides the opportunity to return to the lesson at a later time to respond from a different point of view or gain practice in other styles of writing.

For example, students will choose the subject on which they wish to take a stand, the sources for their research, the audience they want to address, their viewpoint, and the means by which they will present their message. A strong element of reality is infused into the writing process. Once students have something to say, they will choose the means of expression, which could range from a letter of complaint to an objective news report to a week of journal entries written by someone lost in the wilderness.

Looking to the Future

On the horizon is a language arts program that finally takes its proper place, not by the wayside as one of several distinct content areas, but in the

driver's seat. Language arts will be the pivotal element at the center of a fully interdisciplinary curriculum with theme-based units traversing all content areas.

Immersed in thought-provoking simulations, students will explore a wealth of multimedia on line. They will navigate effortlessly among the components: an expansive multimedia database, a library of essential tools and templates, interactive interviews with experts representing a variety of opinions and backgrounds, on-line encyclopedias, and customized skill instruction always just a screen away. Students will write, then read, do some research, and write again. The steps in the writing process will begin to merge, just as they do for the 'real' writer.

The Writing Processor is more than just a word processor—it prompts students through the five-step writing process, offering built-in assistance for prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing with handy pull-down menus.

In writing, students develop their thinking skills. They reconstruct knowledge, plan communication, shape their message, and review the entire process. Rather than a barebones assignment such as "write a story about your favorite character," students will rise to the challenge of producing broad-based written records or portfolios that include written observations from the field of science, charts from math, timelines for social studies, and graphic organizers summarizing books read off-line. Writing will span all disciplines to support the language arts-based outcome. This will promote not just better language skills and acquisition of information, but genuine learning. According to middle school educator James Beane, "Genuine learning involves interaction with the environment in such a way that what we experience becomes integrated into our system of meanings. Integration is something that we do ourselves; it is not done for us by others."

The next generation of language arts programs will help students to listen and think, read and think, speak and think, and write and think, using fully interactive media. Critical thinking is the DNA of language arts, of literacy, of communication. Learning domains will not be isolated; writing lessons will integrate reading, writing, and critical thinking in problem-solving simulations. The constant aim of Jostens' writing programs is to facilitate the growth and maturation of children, not only in communicating, but also in thinking reflectively, identifying and clarifying personal beliefs, evaluating aspirations and interests, and acting upon problem situations both individually and collectively. Just as they will be called upon to do as literate adults.

It is wise to write on many subjects,
to try many themes,
That so you may find the right and inspiring one.
You must try a thousand themes before
you find the right one,
As nature makes a thousand acorns to get one oak.
—Henry David Thoreau

1. Calkins, L. (1986). *The Art of Teaching Writing.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Susan Ludwig, MA, has been a classroom teacher. She is currently a reading specialist and instructional designer for Jostens Learning Corporation in San Diego.

For more information about Jostens Learning Corporation, write 6170 Cornerstone Court East, Suite 300, San Diego, CA 92101.

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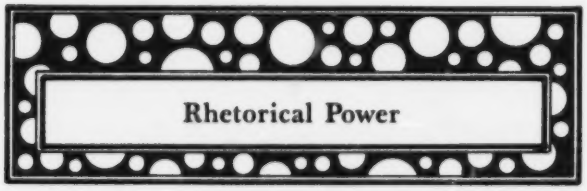
A Modest Proposal to Reduce the Number of Social Studies Reports Written by Students

Linda Polin

When I studied chemistry I found it interesting mainly for its analogies. One of the most useful I ever encountered was the distinction between a mixture and a solution. I hope my high school and college chem professors will pardon my inaccuracies, but I recall a mixture as a liquid in which two or more products are suspended—dispersed evenly around but still very much separate, whereas a solution is a liquid in which two or more products have truly dissolved and become a third. I want to use this analogy to suggest three authentic and empowering roles for writing in the social studies classroom: rhetoric, persuasion, and commentary. These do not describe mixtures of writing and social studies, but rather, hopefully, a solution characterized by the complete dissolve of the separate elements to constitute a third.



Most kids can recite at least the opening lines of the Gettysburg address. Most know Lincoln "said" it. Fewer recall it is on the occasion of the dedication of a Civil War burial ground; fewer still know how terrible the battle which preceded it actually was. I'd venture to guess that none understand the political impact of the words Lincoln spoke, merely referring to it as the speech that "freed the slaves."

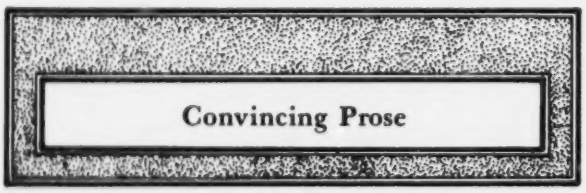
In a recent article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Garry Wills details the occasion and political context that surrounded Lincoln's address. He examined evidence about the thoughtfulness and intent of Lincoln's words and concluded that, unlike what we have all grown up believing, it is very, very unlikely that Lincoln scribbled the words to the speech on the back of an envelope while riding the train to Gettysburg. Indeed, part of his argument is based upon a careful consideration of Lincoln's style and writing habits.

In one fascinating section of the article he gives us side-by-side passages of Seward's draft for Lincoln's second inaugural speech and Lincoln's own masterful revisions of that draft. Here's a sample. Seward writes, "The mystic chords which, proceeding from so many battle-fields and so many patriot graves, pass through all the hearts and all the hearths in this broad continent of ours, will yet harmonize in their ancient music when breathed upon by the guardian angel of the nation." Lincoln rewrites, "The mystic chords of memory, streching (sic) from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

Now you try it...

Wills continues in his careful analysis to lay bare the source of power in Lincoln's rhetorical style. It is a terrific lesson for the writing teacher to pass along to students. To make it a successful lesson, begin by examining an influential speech from the domain of social studies; for example, Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech; Churchill's "blood, sweat, and tears," Kennedy's inaugural address. Try rewriting the prose. Can you make it better? What makes it work? Wills' article gives us some ideas about where to look.

After examining prose and uncovering the "power tools" of rhetoric, ask students to write speeches for meaningful real-world occasions. For example, suppose you were invited to come down to South Central Los Angeles to dedicate a new community center. What would you say? What should you say? Work on it, revise it, try it out. Can you do it in 272 words? That's all Lincoln used.



There is more to Lincoln's speech than its powerful rhetoric, and herein lies my second rule for writing in the social studies classroom. Wills examines the deeper meaning of the speech and discusses lesser-known reactions to it. Not everyone viewed it as an inspirational call to unity under the banner of the Constitution. Wills comments, "Some

people, looking on from a distance, saw that a giant (if benign) swindle had been performed. The Chicago *Times* quoted the letter of the Constitution to Lincoln—noting its lack of reference to equality, its tolerance for slavery—and said that Lincoln was betraying the instrument he was on oath to defend, traducing the men who died for the letter of that fundamental law."

Calling it a "stunning verbal coup," Wills describes how Lincoln reinterpreted the Constitution, expanding its meaning beyond merely the anti-King George III assertion of the equality of men (be they monarchs or citizens) to include the equality of black and white men living in the United States. In rather lyrical prose, Wills says of Lincoln's Gettysburg audience, "They walked off from those curving graves on the hillside, under a changed sky, into a different America. Lincoln had revolutionized the Revolution, giving people a new past to live with that would change their future indefinitely." He is writing here of the lack of explicit mention in the Constitution of slavery. Lincoln's choice of words pulls together the Union as a single people bound together under the Constitution. Indeed, we learn that before the address the United States was used as a plural noun (the United States are) and afterward as a collective noun (the United States is).

That's a powerful pen. How did he do that? The how is partly explained by the why. He needed to do it. He had a purpose, a message, and he planned his speech accordingly, so Wills argues.

Now you try it...

Students do write in the social studies classroom, but most often it is the obligatory "report," a meandering exposition that presents for the teacher evidence that the student has been to the library and read up on the subject. These things are as painful for teachers to read as they are for students to write. No wonder we periodically allow the salt-and-flour map, the popsicle stick fort, and the magazine picture collage.

Report writing is not authentic prose. It is an academic display of competence or knowledge that the teacher can grade. The bogus nature of the task deprives it of clues for students about how to do a good job. That can be easily remedied. History is always open to interpretation and argument, so let's argue.

Report writing is not authentic prose. It is an academic display of competence or knowledge that the teacher can grade. Both reader and writer understand this. It is, quite simply, a bogus task. And, the bogus nature of the task deprives it of clues for students about how to do a good job. A genuine and known audience, a message to convey, and an urge to communicate are missing. That can be easily remedied. History is always open to interpretation and argument, so let's argue.

Even younger elementary students can participate in persuasive prose or argumentation. Consider the fifth graders' study of the age of exploration. Why should anyone fund Columbus's voyage? Re-enact the scene at the court of the King and Queen of Spain. Include the Church, which had high stakes both in the science of the day and the spread of Christianity. (Warning: You won't find your history textbook very helpful.) Oh my gosh, the students are going to have to go to the library and read up on the subject (let's call it doing some investigative journalism). In studying an event, consider the message each of the key players in the event wants to communicate either to his or her compatriots or to the opposition or both. In short, don't do a report on Columbus, *be* Columbus (or whomever). Prepare his speeches and letters, his funding proposals; make his argument. To do so you will have to understand the man and his times.

Satire and Commentary: The Essayist

We don't have many essayists left anymore; it's a dead or dying art. Perhaps its demise corresponds with the immense decline in citizen participation in government and social issues. This section reflects my own sense of loss of compelling social commentary and my probably futile interest in reviving it.

The social commentary or essay is a formal piece of writing, crafted and carefully targeted. I won't presume to lay out the rules of the essay here. You can go look it up or learn from models (Zwick, in press). Commentary and political satire (a kind of commentary) are important tools of reform and change in society and provide valuable insights for the historian looking back in time.

One of our nation's best satirists and essayists was Mark Twain. Did you know that Twain was vice president of the Anti-Imperialist League, which was created to protest the acquisition of the Philippines following the Philippine-American War of 1899 to 1902? Twain, a highly visible profile in the United States, wrote and spoke in vehement opposition to a number of foreign policy moves that he felt betrayed the anti-imperialist roots our nation laid down in its revolutionary War of Independence. Consider this excerpt dated Dec. 31, 1900: "I bring you the stately matron

—continued on p. 46

USA GeoGraph
Macintosh Version 1.0
System requirements: Mac Plus, Classic Series, LC Series, SE, SE/30, II Series, Quadra and Powerbook Series
Hard disk required; System 6.0.5 or later
1 MB for monochrome systems; 2MB for color system (color monitor recommended)
Apple ImageWriter® Series, Apple StyleWriter, Apple LaserWriter® Series, Hewlett Packard PaintWriter, and Color QuickDraw®-compatible printers
Retail price: $69.
MECC
6160 Summit Drive North
Minneapolis, MN 55430-4003; ph. 1-800-685-6322.

Educators have long complained that U.S. students lack basic knowledge about geography. In the not-too-distant past, I taught high school students who didn't know the simplest of directions (north, south, east, west), who weren't sure in which direction the sun rose or set, who had never heard the terms "latitude" or "longitude," and who thought Los Angeles was east of San Diego. Perhaps this "academic void" is partially explained by the way geography is traditionally taught—through the isolated memorization and recitation of names, dates, numbers, and facts. The amount of data seems overwhelming and of little relevance. Simply put, content is seldom presented in a way that sparks student interest or that helps students to easily make connections to other content areas.

Technology is rapidly changing all that. In the last few years, the release of new geography software programs, some very game-like, bring this subject to life by providing a variety of ways for students to search for, display, and interpret those once meaningless facts and figures. One of the best is MECC's reasonably priced **USA GeoGraph**. Originally designed and marketed for the Apple IIgs, **USA GeoGraph** has just been released for the Macintosh. MECC looked to leading geography educators to produce an application founded on five fundamental themes: location, place, relationships within places, movement, and regions.

Just a minute, I hear you say! Isn't writing the focus of *The Writing Notebook*? Why aren't you reviewing a "language arts" product? My answer is simply: Consider **USA GeoGraph** one of your better interdisciplinary tools. With a wealth of categorized information, this program is really a sophisticated, interactive almanac. In the hands of an insightful teacher, **USA GeoGraph** is at home in any classroom where thinking, analysis, and writing are valued.

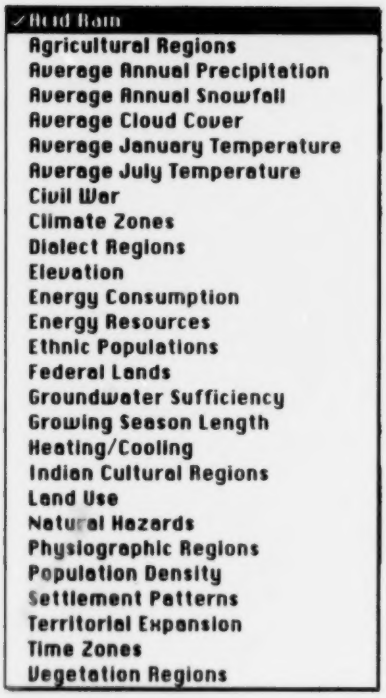
This program is really a sophisticated, interactive almanac. In the hands of an insightful teacher, USA GeoGraph is at home in any classroom where thinking, analysis, and writing are valued.

Researchers and practitioners agree that to write clearly we must think clearly, and **USA GeoGraph** is an excellent critical thinking tool that invites exploration and discovery. Users quickly see that there is no single "right" way to view or analyze information. They realize that the same data can be interpreted and presented in a variety of ways, some more valid or usable than others. With the depth of information provided (and with the teacher able to import up to 10 additional categories), **USA GeoGraph** is a great researcher's assistant. Most important, students can easily export maps, text, or database information into other applications, giving their work greater depth and power. More on that later.

Put USA GeoGraph Through Its Paces. . .

Begin with the Overview map in order to see the location of the United States in the world and the proper geographic positions of Alaska, Hawaii, and U.S. territories. Three zoom levels allow in-depth exploration of a particular state or geographic region; these views can also be accessed through the Maps menu. Although maps cannot be disproportionately resized, holding down the Shift key resizes maps in more useful 25% increments. "Slide around" on region and state maps by clicking a gray area adjacent to any state—as long as that gray area is part of the United States. Unfortunately, border states are not labeled, and initial exploration can be haphazard and unfocused.

Click once from the Overview or Fifty States maps to view a particular state or territory, or select multiple areas from several regions (either by using the Shift key or the Maps menu). Once an area is selected, simply toggle between the Map, Data Cards, and Data Table to learn about each of the selected areas. A note of caution: A single click on another area de-selects the previous selection unless that Window has been named.



The Maps menu: 27 themes.

Although only one document can be opened at a time, up to 10 Windows (or views) of information can be displayed within a document. Each Window can be named (and renamed), but you must Save the document in order to save Windows. Once a Window is named, it can be closed (to avoid on-screen clutter), but it is easily reaccessed through the Windows menu. Windows (or views) can be duplicated, deleted, or linked. Linked Windows examine the same database selection and Focus in different ways, and are set apart in the Windows menu. Use function keys to create specific Window types.

USA GeoGraph's 27 Theme maps can be used only at the Fifty States level. Explore a wide range of geographical, historical, and cultural topics. Use the Show Key function to see a key describing the meanings of colors or patterns on the resulting map. Again, zooming in on or clicking on a specific state or geographic region causes the "theme" to be deselected; it's important to be vigilant about naming a Window using the pull-down Maps menu to change views.

Four types of comparisons can produce interesting results: Compare Places, Compare Categories, Compare Rankings, and Contrast. Encourage your students to make predictions, hypothesize, and describe trends over time. It is here that a change in Focus can bring dramatic changes in data, because Focus lets you target some portion of the country that hasn't been predefined by the program.

Navigate by defining search rules and linking them with "and/or" connectors. Note that search "rules" do not display on the resulting map, nor is there a way to "toggle" to the search dialog box.

Export is one of **USA GeoGraph's** strongest functions, allowing Windows of text or graphic information to be read and used by other Macintosh applications. Export data cards and data tables as tab-delimited text files for use in word processing, database, or spreadsheet programs. Export maps, graphs, or distribution tables as PICT files for use in graphics programs such as *Studio 8* or *SuperPaint*. These files can be imported completely intact and can be fully manipulated by the other software applications. You can Export a Window's entire contents, including a key if it is displayed (unlike Copy, which affects only the visual contents of a Window).

USA GeoGraph's graphing functions are also noteworthy and especially useful for visual learners. Colorful, keyed pie charts, bar graphs, and scatter graphs are easily produced.

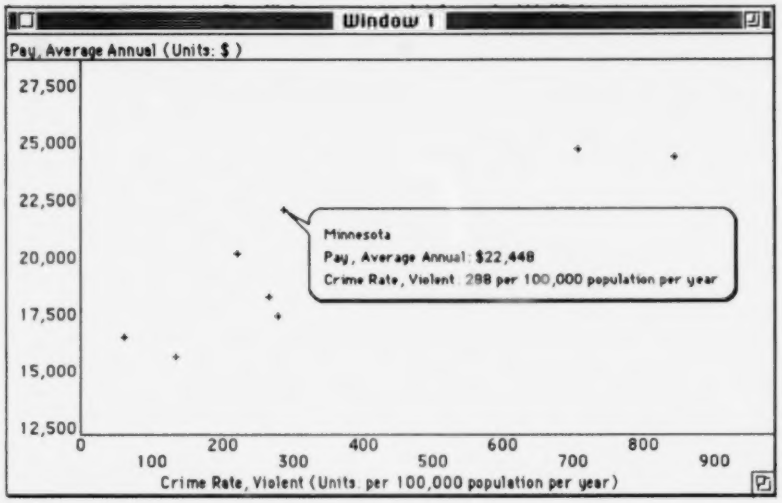
The teacher is encouraged to set up several configuration files that accommodate a variety of users or units of study. Configurable items include Map Features, Focus, and units of measurement.

But What Does This Have To Do With Writing?

Everything! According to the developers at MECC, the focus of **USA GeoGraph** is on "'human geography,' the relationship between where people live and how they live." Exploration of the **USA GeoGraph** databases and maps lets students imagine how people live in different regions of the nation and how people's lives and lifestyles are impacted by location, climate, and the presence of natural resources.

Remember, No Program Is Perfect

Many types of help are included. The content of the User's Guide is excel-



Scatter graph.

lent. Topics are thoroughly discussed and useful exercises are included. Unfortunately, the layout may cause unnecessary frustration; the material is not presented in manageable chapters or chunks, so a change in topic is not readily apparent. Consequently, I gave the index a good workout. Exhaustive application help is available under the Apple menu; specific map-level help is generally available by holding down the Control key. **USA GeoGraph** also takes advantage of several System 7 functions, including balloon help and publish. Note, however, that the user cannot subscribe to text or graphics published by other programs.

Sound is sorely missed, especially since the technology readily accommodates it. And flowers and flags must be visually displayed, not merely described.

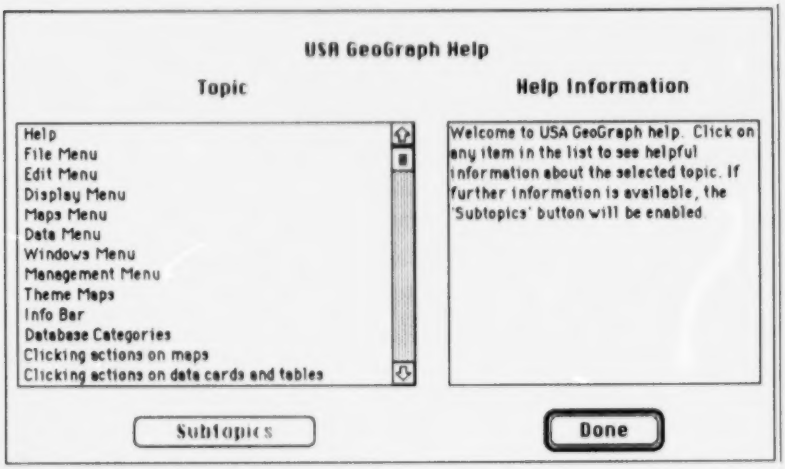
MECC developers have taken advantage of function keys but have managed to keep much of this information hidden away. A thorough reading of the User's Guide is necessary to become a savvy user.

As mentioned previously, individual views or Windows are too easily "lost" or replaced. A mere single clicking on another area de-selects the previous selection unless that Window has been named (or a different perspective accessed via the pull-down menu).

The Import category (in the Management menu) allows teachers to add up to 10 categories to the program's database, but the process is lengthy. Data correctly added, however, can be used in all **USA GeoGraph** functions.

The bottom line: It's time to welcome **USA GeoGraph** to the classroom, and especially to classrooms where writing in all subject areas is encouraged.

Marie Bober, 4502 E. Briarwood Terrace, Phoenix, AZ 85044.



Help (under the Apple icon)

Try some of the following activities, using USA GeoGraph as one of your classroom resources:

- Focus on descriptive language and imagery by having students create travel guides, perhaps tailored to particular groups of people. Have students highlight each state's strengths. Encourage them to use words strong enough to attract the recreation enthusiast, the botanist, or the retiree.
- Ease students into poetry writing with acrostics or shape poems. Challenge them to describe particular trends or themes with odes or elegies.
- Focus on dialogue and communication skills by having students produce newscasts or dramatizations.
- Have students create innovative study aids through board or card games.
- Celebrate cultural diversity. Let students explore each state's ethnic and racial composition, economy, and other factors to predict demographic changes in the next 10 years.
- In collaborative groups, produce a class newsletter or magazine, begin a pen-pal program, write historical fiction, develop characterizations, or debate topical issues.
- Concentrate on characterization by having students role play a state official who must tackle a troublesome problem such as hazardous waste production or violent crime.
- Using the program's bar graphs or scatter graphs, test correlations between categories. Lead a spirited class discussion on cause-effect relationships (including whether or not numeric correlations can be used accurately in this manner).

News from the National Writing Project

Stephen Marcus

"You don't have to learn 501 commands!"

Beverly Chin, Director of the Montana Writing Project, is emphatic about that point. She has been incorporating technology into her project's Summer Institutes since the early 1980s, but in a way that quite appropriately emphasizes the teaching of writing, not the teaching of technology. Her NWP site serves the whole state, so each summer the twenty-some teachers come for a 4-week residential experience.

Early on, the participants were asked to bring an Apple IIe computer with them, and if possible a printer. The computers were set up in one half of the meeting room and became the group's computer lab in order to support the writing completed in the course of the Institute. At first, about 10 teachers brought computers, the next year about 15, and the third year all 20. The project is now able to count on having enough computers to provide people with the tools they need.

Typically, one hour is spent the first day familiarizing any participants new to the computer with the basics of its operation. They are joined for an hour on the second day by those with some experience but who need to brush up on basic skills or acquaint themselves with the word processor used during the Institute. Thereafter, participants learn what they need to learn in order to accomplish a task at hand. Additionally, specific word processing procedures may be taught in connection with a particular demonstration lesson—how to use search-and-replace to explore the presence of "to be" verbs and insert suitable substitutes, for example.

The key here is that the computers are used as a readily available and useful resource to accomplish a specific writing task or to illustrate a particular teaching technique. As the project director notes, the teachers don't have to learn a comprehensive set of word processing commands. They don't spend time learning every trick in the book. And they don't have to begin or end with the same level of expertise. The Institute provides the help the participants need for whatever level of expertise they possess. The lab remains an adjunct to the Institute's concerns.

Care is taken to provide participants with opportunities to discuss how a classroom can function with only a few computers or with a complete lab available to students. The teachers themselves get a chance to experience a range of set-ups, sometimes by having some of the Institute's equipment taken out of service so that they can work together on projects and experiment with issues of scheduling and resource management.

An important feature of Montana's approach is that once the equipment is set up, it belongs to everybody. People do not identify the specific equipment they brought as "my computer." The lab belongs to the group as a whole. The group helps build it and they all share its resources (a kind of ongoing technological potluck).

Director Chin finds that the Institute's arrangement provides a "low stress/high success" environment. Teachers come away with insights about how to use a lab environment effectively and how to make richer use of the existing technology. They also learn to appreciate individual differences regarding editing hardcopy as opposed to doing onscreen editing. As a result of their experience with the project's Summer Institute, they have demonstrated a much greater desire to incorporate technology into their instruction and into presentations for state-sponsored conferences and workshops.

The Montana Writing Project seems to have developed a wonderful method for meeting the needs of its participants that is well suited to the nature of its program, particularly in serving a wide geographical area. The approach remains rooted in very practical and resource-effective strategies. It doesn't cost the project a lot of money, and the technology is there to serve the needs of writers, not technologists.

Future directions include attempts to establish a networked lab on campus and an e-mail system to help tie together project teachers from around the state. The project's use of technology will continue to serve the needs of teachers in the spirit of the NWP approach to the teaching and learning of writing.

This column profiles National Writing Project Network affiliates that incorporate technology into their activities as well as state and national efforts related to the NWP. For information about becoming an NWP affiliate, write James Gray, Director, National Writing Project, School of Education, Tolman Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94708. For information about the California Writing Project/California Technology Project Alliance, write Stephen Marcus, CWP/CTP Alliance Coordinator, SCWriP, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA 93106. For information about the Montana Writing Project, write Beverly Chin, Director, MWP, Department of English, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812.

Classroom Writing Activities to Support the Curriculum

Judy Piper

These activities use literature as a springboard for the study of history/social science and as a prompt for original writing.

Judy Piper, Consultant, Instructional Support Services, Stanislaus County Department of Education, 801 County Center Three Court, Modesto, CA 93355.

A COUNTRY FAR AWAY

A Country Far Away, written by Nigel Gray and illustrated by Philippe Dupasquier (Orchard Books), was suggested by a friend for my young son. This story has the text written in the middle of the page with two sets of pictures that show the same activity for two boys from very different cultures. These identical experiences, such as going shopping, occur in a small African village and a modern suburban setting. Work with a fellow teacher to pair your students up with older (or younger) children as each class studies a different country. The pair can talk and come up with some original examples of what children in their countries might do that would illustrate the differences between them. Use a large print word processor for the text of the book and have students illustrate each of the phrases for their own country. What a great social studies activity for peer tutors!

THE BUCK STOPS HERE

The Buck Stops Here, written by Alice Provensen (Harper & Row), is a great book to use when studying the Presidents of the United States. It has one page dedicated to each President with the facts written in "rap." The illustration for each of the rap stanzas is designed to be a memory assist or mnemonic device that will help students to remember the name of each President and the order in which they served.

For follow-up activities the author has also included a section called "Notes About the Presidents," which has several additional facts about each of them. We have often used this book with adults during our inservices and have found that it appeals to all ages. Students would have fun writing their own "raps" to help them remember the states, capitals, or other points of geography.

THE STORY VINE

Storytelling is a "remarkably successful method of introducing other cultures in a positive way," writes author Anne Pellowski in *The Story Vine*, a collection illustrated by Lynn Sweat and published by Macmillan. There are many different ways and methods of telling a story discussed in this book. All the stories come from around the world and use accompanying objects, music, or visual devices such as string, which is used in the telling of the Cat's Cradle. Ms. Pellowski also includes a list of some of the stories and collections that are her personal favorites, although she would rather that storytellers search out their own stories to tell. This is certainly a good resource to begin with and I believe those who take advantage of it will begin to find other tales to tell in their classrooms. Have your students do a quickwrite after you tell them a story. How did the accompanying objects add to their enjoyment and understanding? Students also could select their favorite and tell the story, complete with an "object," to younger children or siblings.

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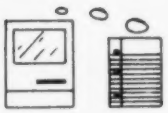


Lab Notes
Bernajean Porter

This new column will focus on writing lab curriculum strategies and activities. And having said that, many of the ideas presented obviously can be altered for use outside a lab setting as well. If you have a lab idea to share in this column, send it on a disk, formatted for the Macintosh, to Bernajean Porter, 1307 Nutmeg Court, Mt. Prospect, IL 60056.

Create Prewriting Collaborative Research Teams

As a prewriting activity, organize student teams to research and gather appropriate information for use by all students as they draft their writing. Divide students into groups, taking into account the project, grade level, and the hardware available.

Imagine a class project to create two newspapers on the American Revolution: one from the Colonial and one from the British point of view. One team might collect, design, or scan graphics from this era. Another group could collect quotes or sayings. A third team's mission would be to collect short biographies of prominent citizens of the time. A fourth group would digitize sound clips (Note: *Bank Street Writer for the Macintosh*, *Word for the Macintosh*, and Hypermedia tools for Apple, Macintosh, and IBM all combine sound and text). Other groups could gather lists of literature, songs, ideas for articles, other world events of the time, and humor.

This process works best for thematic units, whether focused on literature, historical eras, a humanities time period, or a science project. This process also can be used successfully with small collaborative groups working on a specific topic, rather than a whole class topic.

Store students' files on a file server or make a class set of data disks. Make sure each research team names and catalogues their electronic file for easy use by other students. The class is now ready to begin their writing project. Final projects might include a newspaper, individual essays, a slide show, or a hypermedia project.

Learning New Software

Learning new software eats into precious instructional time. Be sure that the trade-off is worth the investment. If the software is a general tool program, it will be used in many different ways throughout the year and worth the time it takes to learn it. Remember that when students are focusing on learning the new software, their attention will be diverted temporarily from concentrating on the writing assignment itself. Here are some ways to ease your classes into using an unfamiliar piece of software:

- Use a short, ungraded assignment (a poem or paragraph, for example) while learning the software.
- Plan extra time in the beginning to learn the program before focusing on the writing assignment.
- Use a writing style that is already familiar and mastered by your students.

It can be hectic when all your students seem to need you all at once to answer questions about using a new piece of software. Use the "three before me" cooperative learning rule. "Three before me" means that students must try to help themselves in three different ways before asking the teacher for help. This encourages independence. Here are some other strategies:

- Train two or three students to be experts *before* the whole class uses the software.
- Recruit volunteers from outside the class, including students in study hall, upper grade students, or parents.
- Have students learn the program in pairs as they talk each other through the steps involved.
- Have clear, concise printed directions available—not all students do well with auditory directions, and students can refer to printed instructions later on.

Peer Review

Many word processors have enhancements that support students in commenting on their peers' writing in interesting ways. Here are some strategies to encourage energetic and useful peer review:

- Use groups of two students to review another piece of writing to encourage discussion as they enter feedback.
- Save the review under a second file name, so the writer's original file is left undisturbed.
- If there is not enough time to do these activities at the computer, make multiple printouts and give students colored pencils to color code their responses.
- Encourage students to use a second color to insert questions, insert asterisks * where more description might be helpful, highlight in bold words that are powerful, and put parentheses ( ) around dull or vague words.
- Create separate review sessions—one for revising for content and another for editing for mechanics.
- If you are using word processors with graphics available, readers might want to insert a specific symbol—one to indicate they

liked what they read, one to indicate they were confused, and another to indicate that they found the idea a strong one. Rubber stamps can serve the same purpose if the computer is not used.

- Word processors with sound available to combine with text give students the chance to leave comments in the form of applause or actual voice comments, which can communicate in a way that mere words left on a page cannot do.

Supporting Evidence

If you have laserdiscs available, students can incorporate visual evidence in their persuasive essays, news reports, presentations, and reports, using laserdiscs that match their topics as they learn to search for video clips to support their opinions and conclusions.

Several options are available for students in presenting their work. They could use software to make bar codes on labels that can be inserted into the text. If the computer is hooked up to a laserdisc player, hypermedia tools create buttons inside the text that show the selected video clips when clicked. Quicktime software allows these video clips to be captured, stored as a file, brought into the Macintosh color monitor as a button to click on, and played in full motion right inside the text.

Bernajean Porter, Senior Partner, The Confluence International Group, a national team of educators. She is presently on contract as a resource consultant with Glenbrook School District #225, Glenbrook, IL.

Old Buddhist Temple

Cramped legs,
Sore muscles,
And hungry stomachs
Fill the old Buddhist temple.

A monotone chorus
Chants vigorously,
Penetrating young ears
In a whir.

Like smooth stone statues
These Cambodian people
Demonstrate strength
  Poise
    Unity
      Art
Which were created centuries ago,
Reciting verses
That have not been forgotten.

As a child
I vaguely remember the chantings,
The spicy aroma of beef soup
Always caught my attention.

Steaming, hot dishes of fried vegetables
Were tidy and placed
In front
Of the yellow clothed monks
To eat.

My stomach would growl
Until my dry mouth
Savored
The sweet, rich food.

The air is perfumed
By flowers
  White
    Pink
      Yellow
And the warm sun
Fills the cool room.

The chanting ceases
Now, as a sixteen year old
I still look forward
To the food
But also learning to listen
To the verses
In the old Buddhist temple.

—*July Khim*

Reprinted with permission from Jordan High School's literary art magazine, **Stylus,** *Volume 18, 1992. Special thanks to Marie Tollstrup and these wonderful poets from her creative writing classes. Jordan High School, 6500 Atlantic Ave., Long Beach, CA 90805.*

Laptops—An Exciting Addition to the Social Science Classroom

Edward R. Riegler

Can technology—and especially laptops—enhance teacher- and student-centered learning in the social science classroom? My answer is a resounding yes!

As a member of our school's Model Technology Project, I have found the use of laptop computers to be a positive and exciting addition to the educational process. They provide opportunities for interesting assignments, increased student motivation, and a renewed enthusiasm for teaching.

Three years ago I became part of a cadre of 25 teachers at Alhambra High School who were trained to use the Macintosh, laserdisc players, VCRs, camcorders, and other technology. I was also trained in the use of Tandy computers and quickly found ways to incorporate the MTS goals of student-centered learning and writing across the curriculum in my two Advanced Placement History classes.

Document analysis and essay writing are crucial parts of AP History. Students must develop a solid background of historical material in preparation for the AP exam in May. The pace of instruction is fast, with two chapters and numerous readings covered each week. Laptops are ideally suited for these tasks.

Each of my sixty students check out a Tandy Model 102 laptop for the year on a contractual arrangement. They carry them to class and store them when necessary during the day. They all use the laptops daily in my class for notetaking.

Notetaking on the Laptops

As a part of the class, four or five students are assigned topics to report on each day. Sample topics include: The significance of the Open Door policy in China; The controversy surrounding Theodore Roosevelt's role in acquiring the Panama Canal; Arguments pro/con for the Roosevelt Corollary; and Evaluation of Theodore Roosevelt's foreign policy. As a student presents his or her report, prepared at home on their laptop, classmates take notes using their laptops. The last ten minutes of the period are reserved for students to print their notes on the two printers in the classroom, or they use other printers available in the building.

The use of laptops has enhanced student interest, facilitated notetaking, and made instruction easier. By the way, my students find their laptops useful in other classes as well. They take good care of them; to date none have been lost or stolen. I am often asked if the clicking of computer keys is distracting. Both my students and I have become accustomed to the clicking and no longer notice it.

Small Group Assignments via Modem

The laptops facilitate tasks other than notetaking. Each computer is equipped with a modem. Students have access to a district message board and can leave messages and receive them at home in the evening. I have developed small group assignments using subjects in our supplemental reading books. On certain nights I leave historical problems on the message board for students. For example, I might ask one group of five to eight students to read the Dred Scott decision, summarize the legal questions involved, and explain the implications for the future. Students dial on, receive the assignment, complete it on the laptop, and report in class the next day. Although clearly the assignment could be written on the blackboard, receiving it via modem at home promotes student interest and involvement. The message board also has the capacity to conduct group chatting of up to five individuals at a time. I frequently participate in such chats from home using my laptop.

Technology makes students the center of their own learning. It has an important and exciting place in the social science classroom of the nineties.

Cooperative Learning Groups

Laptops promote cooperative learning. While each group discusses a problem such as the role of the "yellow press" in the Spanish-American War, one student serves as secretary and records the group's findings. The notes are printed and distributed to the rest of the class when group leaders present their findings orally. This approach is invaluable during group review for the AP exam. Student groups create outlines of review topics such as treaties, tariffs, Supreme Court cases, causes of wars, important presidents, etc. Each group's outline is printed and distributed to the class for study. This approach enables the class to cover a large amount of material in a short period of time.

Perhaps the most valuable outcome of the laptops is the improved quality of student essays. When students are assigned sample AP essays, they type them in at home. At school they edit and format them using the Macs in the computer lab after uploading them from their laptop to the Mac. The essay is then printed on the laser printer. Not only has the overall quality improved, but grading printed essays is much easier than struggling with a wide variety of handwriting.

Laptops as a Research Tool

The value of the laptops in library research was shown in a cross-curriculum English/Social Science project developed with the help of the English honors teacher. Students were formed into groups and assigned topics dealing with the culture of various periods in American history. Each group was asked to cover literature, art, science, drama, education, and music for a specific period. Students brought their laptops to the school library, public library, and the Cal State L.A. research library to record their research. The notes were uploaded to the Macs and a formal report was written, edited, formatted, and printed. Each group also prepared a short ten-minute video highlighting the cultural achievements of their period, which they presented in class along with the formal report. Some students learned to use the camcorder, *VCR Companion*, and interactive video. In the multimedia lab they used the sound digitizer, video digitizer, scanner, and videodisc player to produce a HyperCard stack. The result: a variety of creative presentations using combinations of text, sound, graphics, and animation under computer control. The assignment proved to be a tremendous learning experience for students and teachers and a real testimony to the value of multimedia in education.

The Future of Technology in My Social Science Class

The addition of two Mac SEs to my classroom will further enhance instruction and learning; students will more easily be able to upload Tandy files. Using the Mac and Kodak's *Datashow*, students will be able to create multimedia presentations using Scholastic's *Point of View: Overview of U.S. History and Civil War and Reconstruction*, a program that allows students and the teacher to use primary sources and 140 other statistical data tables. The Mac and *Data Show* will be invaluable for class demonstrations on thesis and paragraph development—essential parts

Students brought their laptops to the school library, public library, and the Cal State L.A. research library to record their research. The notes were uploaded to the Macs and a formal report was written, edited, formatted, and printed.

of the AP essay exam. Finally, an interactive videodisc workstation can be created where students can create HyperCard stacks on the Mac that utilize specific parts of laserdiscs such as *Vote 88* and the *Encyclopedia of the Twentieth Century*. And, with a modem and the necessary software, my students will be able to participate in the Interactive Communications and Simulations program at the University of Michigan and become a part of global classrooms as they communicate with other students throughout the U.S. and the world on assigned simulation topics.

This takes us far beyond the traditional realm of the history teacher—standing in front of the class, lecturing and assigning chapters from the textbook—and of students completing the typical report and term paper in the course of the year. Technology makes students the center of their own learning. It has an important and exciting place in the social science classroom of the nineties.

Edward R. Riegler, Social Science teacher, Alhambra High School, 101 S. 2nd St., Alhambra, CA 91801.

Exploring the History of Writing with Young Children

Although people have been on this earth for hundreds and thousands of years, their writing skills are just about 6,000 years old. The development of writing can be attributed to the contributions made by many civilizations.

Animals on Cave Walls

About 15,000 years ago, people living in cave shelters created the first drawing and painting tools. Using these tools, the cave dwellers created many diverse representations of animals on the cave walls. These beautiful images provide a visual record of ancient animal life in Africa, France, and Spain, and also suggest a first attempt at a form of writing.

Sumerian Cuneiform Writing

In Mesopotamia (today's southern Iraq) about 5000 years ago, something amazing began to occur. A group of people called Sumerians started keeping simple "written" records on wet clay slabs called tablets. Before this time records were kept by memory, but it was sometimes difficult to memorize and remember information in this way, especially if there were many different things to account for.

The people selected to write and record information were called scribes. They used twig, reed, or stick pens to press a series of lines, dots, crossed lines, circles, and holes into wet clay tablets, thus creating a written form of accurate record keeping. Over time the pens of the scribes were carefully cut and shaped into thick, pointed pens or pens with cuneus or wedge tips. Thus, the Sumerian style of writing became known as Cuneiform.

Cuneiform symbols eventually were used to express ideas as well as to keep records. The signs and symbols were very precise in meaning; scribes used a kind of reference tablet or dictionary in order to maintain correct symbol representation and meaning in their work.

Egyptian Hieroglyphics

In approximately 3100 B.C. the Egyptians created a beautiful form of writing named hieroglyphics for "holy" (hiero) "writing" (glyph) by the Greeks when they saw it hundreds of years later. Hieroglyphs were used to keep records, express ideas, and most importantly, to create symbols for sounds, thereby preserving spoken language in written form.

Hieroglyphs were written on clay, wood, and reed plant paper called papyrus. The Egyptians believed that writing was a form of power and protection, so scribes were well respected. Usually only boys became scribes, but archaeological evidence has shown that girls from wealthy families or the daughters of scribes were taught to read and write. Students learning to be scribes worked very hard, using a brush and ink to form hieroglyphs on a clay or a gesso-covered wooden board. When students became proficient writers they were allowed to use papyrus. Students wrote and copied many different things, so they learned geography, literature, mathematics, science, and medicine. Once educated, a scribe could possess any important job in the community, doing things most kings could not do—read, understand language, and write.

A Consonant Alphabet

In 1,000 B.C., Italy, Spain, and Greece started using a consonant alphabet. It is believed that the Phoenicians, many of whom were traders, exporters, and sea merchants, brought their writing system to these countries.

A	alpha α	N	nu ν	B	beta β	X	xi ξ
G	gamma γ	O	omicron ο	D	delta δ	P	pi π
E	epsilon ε	R	rho ρ	Z	zeta ζ	S	sigma σ, ς
E	eta η	T	tau τ	TH	theta θ	U	upsilon υ
I	iota ι	F	phi φ	K	kappa κ	CH	chi χ
L	lambda λ	PS	psi ψ	M	mu μ	O	omega ω

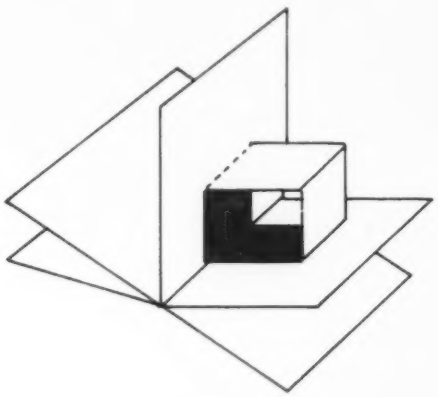
By 500 B.C., the Greeks had developed a writing tablet which consisted of a wooden or slate base covered with a thick coat of wax, which enabled errors to be rubbed out or passages to be replaced with a new coat of wax. Parchment, an expensive form of paper, also was produced using scraped, stretched, and dried animal skins. The Greek education system is well known. Most significant was the development of a written alphabet consisting of 24 letter symbols, both consonants and vowels, which is related to the alphabet we now use.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Creating a Visual Animal Record

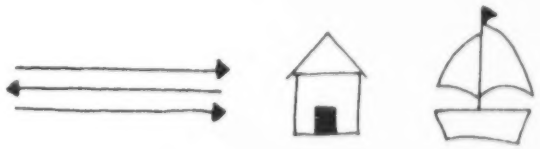
Invite students to bring small family pets to class. Set up a schedule in which students, individually or in pairs, observe and draw one pet in a 25- to 30-minute time period. In a quiet classroom area, arrange a workspace which will accommodate two double station desks. Desk one will be an observation space. It should be large enough to set up a pet in a box or cage and allow for viewing of the pet. Desk two will be the technology table. It should be large enough for a computer, drawing pad, input device, and if possible, a printer. Students can observe the pet and make a short written outline on lined paper that includes important characteristics and details they want to include in their computer illustration. Using selected drawing software such as *DazzleDraw*, *816Paint*, *Deluxe Paint*, or *Kid Pix*, each student will create an illustration. After completing the drawing/painting and saving it on disk, have students return to their seats to write a description or riddle about the pet, using their earlier outline as a reference. Student illustrations can be printed when all artwork is completed, with the descriptions or riddles accompanying the illustrations.

If desired, students can make a POP-UP BOOK, with the pet description or riddle on a single flat page and the illustration (or riddle answer) on the pop-up page to follow.



Create a Cuneiform Reference Book

Sumerian cuneiform symbols were used for record keeping and for expressing ideas. For example:



travel/travelling house boat

Using drawing software, have pairs of students create one page of cuneiform symbols that represent 10-12 ideas. Combine the student-designed pages together and bind into a Reference Book. Print enough copies of each page to make six books.

Form students into five groups and give each group a copy of the Reference Book. Using only the illustrated ideas in the Reference Book, have students create a story. Save the stories on a disk titled "Electronic Journal."

If you have access to HyperStudio and *816Paint*, students can create Cuneiform stories using their Reference Book and *816Paint* and then transfer these visual stories to a HyperStudio stack. First, students must create their stories using 640 screen resolution (colors will be limited) using *816Paint*. HyperStudio

is set up to create a Cuneiform Stack. When students are ready to ADD BACKGROUNDS, they can add their *816Paint* illustrations. After a stack of stories is made, students can use the output on the monitor jack to record their stories on video or they can use the HyperStudio microphone to add sound affects!

A Poem Written in the Ancient Greek Alphabet
Using drawing-software, students can write a simple poem using Greek alphabet symbols.

Greek Fables
The Greeks are known for their fables. Aesop was a famous Greek storyteller who lived in the 6th Century B.C. Aesop's fables usually had animals as the main characters. The animals would act like people and their good or bad actions would teach a lesson about everyday life.

Using the word processor, have students write a fable and illustrate it with computer-drawn images. After the story is complete and printed out on computer paper, turn the paper over. Using cotton balls and vegetable oil, rub the entire paper with a thin layer of oil until it is visibly coated. Place each paper between two sheets of manila paper and leave it for about one week. When each page of the story has been dried between the manila sheets, remove the manila paper and students will read their fables on a form of semi-transparent parchment paper.

"Writing itself is one of the great, free human activities. There is scope for individuality, and elation, and discovery. In writing, for the person who follows with trust and forgiveness what occurs to him, the world remains always ready and deep, an inexhaustible environment, with the combined vividness of an actuality and the flexibility of a dream. Working back and forth between experience and thought, writers have more than space and time can offer. They have the whole unexplored realm of human vision."
—William Stafford

Nancy Scali, Arroyo School, 1700 East 7th St., Ontario, CA 91764.

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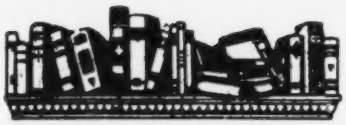

Book Review
Mary Cron

The Encounter

Written by Jane Yolen; illus. by David Shannon.
Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992, $14.95.

It's amazing that it has taken this long for someone to write (and get published) a children's book about the Columbus saga from the native population's point of view. Jane Yolen, in her beautifully written and illustrated book, recounts the story of Columbus's landing on one of the Caribbean islands through the words of a young Taíno boy. In doing so she blows open a familiar historical story that has been one of the foundations of the social studies curriculum for decades. Columbus didn't really discover that land FIRST. There were already real people who lived there. In fact, they were very helpful people who welcomed Columbus to their land and only later found out that warnings like those given by Yolen's native boy should have been listened to. Even though this book is disturbing (so is the history of our species), rather than being traumatized, our children will benefit from the telling of an important historical event in a three-dimensional manner. Their view of what constitutes learning about "history" will come to include not just the telling and memorizing of facts but a rich painting of human life in all its multicultural and complex diversity. They will hopefully insist on questioning any simplistic tale that considers only the perspective of one individual, group, or race.

The story and the way it was written and illustrated offer many stepping-off places for writing. Students can write dream journals that recount some of their own dreams and prompt them to comment on what else the boy could have done to effectively communicate the warnings of his dream. What do they do when they have an uneasy feeling about something? They can research and write about significant times in history where there is record of a warning before a catastrophic event. They can write the same story from the point of view of a cabin boy or girl who might have been on the ship with Columbus. Since neither Columbus nor the Taínos thought that each other were really human beings, students can write about how each of these groups might define what it means to be a human being. They can list and analyze the gifts exchanged between the Taíno tribe and Columbus. What significant differences can be found in the gifts given? —the gifts withheld? How can power and manipulation be part of gift-giving? Students can also list the way the author describes the gifts. What is a "round pool to hold in the hand that gives a man back his face"? Students could create image-rich descriptions to describe everyday items. Most important, students can write about actual events in their own town or school from the perspective of several different people or groups involved to try to capture the "whole" story. They could compare a 5 W's type of journalistic account of the story with primary source materials like letters and journals that capture the perspective of individuals.

Ironically, it is in what Yolen doesn't include that we find some of the richest opportunities for writing and the use of technology.

Ironically, it is in what Yolen doesn't include that we find some of the richest opportunities for writing and the use of technology. Her story of the small boy who tries to warn his elders of the danger Columbus and his crew bring leaves the reader with the impression that the native population in their simplicity, kindness, and love for trinkets gave up their land without resistance. The fact that there is more to the story to tell opens the door for further student research and writing. What really happened after that first encounter? Did the Tainos put up any form of resistance? They eventually were wiped out, but how and when? Students can use a database to collect information regarding events during the years after Columbus's first visit. They can create timelines to track the history of the native population. They can write poems, stories, plays, letters, journals, etc. as if they were a girl or boy living at one point in time during that history.

The other thing Yolen cannot include is historical verification that this boy lived and acted in this way at the Columbus encounter. She says, "I recreated what he might have said—using historical records and the storyteller's imagination." This can lead to a wonderful investigation of what it means to record history. How do we know when something is historically accurate? What is historical fiction? When is it difficult to separate fact from fiction? —one person's perception of the truth from another's? Writing and the use of technology can support these investigations in various ways. The important thing is that history has come alive for students. In this beautiful and disturbing book, human beings with all their strengths, frailties, and failures have been included, and voices long silent have been heard. Thank you, Jean Yolen!

Mary Cron, RYMEL, Inc., 777 Silver Spur Rd., Suite 229, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274.

American Families Project

Ray Medeiros

Have your students ever read the heartwarming letters written by post-Revolutionary war settlers Patricia and Peter Carpenter of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania? Or those of their children—David, a fur merchant, and Sara, who married a Susquehannock Indian? Probably not, because these families are fiction. They are part of the American Families project.

While integrating computer, research, and writing skills, as well as peer interaction, this project enables students to construct a family and, at the same time, give students the opportunity to understand in a more concrete fashion the development of American history.

The project is designed to make use of telecommunications in a unique way. Two or more schools, utilizing telecommunications, participate in a creative writing, historical research activity. Students in each school are given roles to play in a fictitious family living in the year 1838. Each group of students in the family receives a brief history of that family, including the names of their brothers and/or sisters. At each school there are three family members (i.e., three Carpenters, three Singletons).

The participating teachers determine the specifics of the assignments such as the historic dates for each letter; when, in real time, the letters will be exchanged; how many letters will be sent during the course of the year; and if there will be any final activity so that the fictional characters can find out about their real "siblings."

After being assigned a role, the student(s) (I also have done this successfully with small groups playing one role) first randomly chooses a place where they would like to live based on the geography of 1838. Some of the family members have to follow certain traditions of the 19th century such as the oldest son inheriting the farm or business and remaining at home, and the youngest daughter usually settling nearby to care for aging parents.

Next, they must create their own family (wife/husband/children) and determine occupations. Then each student writes an initial letter to a sibling at the other school or site, with these pairings predetermined by the teachers involved. This first letter describes events in the recent past of their family, including marriages, births, deaths, business, and travel. Students are asked to include specific dates. The purpose of this first letter is to introduce siblings to each other and to begin to create a data base, family tree, and timeline. Having these tasks to complete adds to the project and provides an opportunity to demonstrate some real uses of these tools. Students have created some elaborate family trees and often send notes to their siblings asking for more specific information such as dates of marriages, birthdates, or maiden names.

In the second and subsequent letters in this project, students are required to include a reference to something that really happened in the year of the letter, and more importantly, something that would have affected their lives.

The following is a sample letter from a sister to a brother:

December 31, 1838

Dearest Jared,

It has been one long year since I have last written to you. I hope that this letter finds you and your bride Elizabeth healthy. The new year is upon us and I pray that it will bring us as much happiness as 1838.

When last I wrote, things here in South Carolina were getting hectic. Joseph does not abide by these people who are talking about seceding from the Union because of the tax problems. His mercantile is doing well and he is thinking of expanding. Young Joseph has taken an interest in the store and is learning his figures while working with his father. Joseph is very proud of his oldest.

The three boys all had bad colds last winter, but Mary and Jesse were spared. Mary's fourth birthday was not uneventful, however; she was playing in the apple tree and fell right onto Nathan! Both were all right except for a couple of rather large bumps on the head.

Just last week, right before Christmas, we had a terrible storm. A traveler stopped during the night and we gave him shelter and a decent meal. You may recognize his name, Henry Clay of Kentucky. He is a very powerful Senator who seems to be thinking of a higher office in the next election. He was a fine man and an eloquent speaker, and he was most pleased to have a dry place to sleep that night.

I do not know if this letter will reach you soon, but we all wish you and your family a very good New Year. Please write as your letters mean so much to all of us.

Your loving sister, Amy.

The letter above is written in a style that emphasizes the family and the writer's life and almost underplays the historical event mentioned. As students read about life in the nineteenth century and the letters written by their siblings, it opens up a forum for discussion concerning social change, the role of women, inventions, politics—a wide variety of topics that are sometimes forced into the curriculum but which in this format become a genuine part of the history they are studying.

Often students adapt their own interests to the letters. For example, one student was fascinated with old coins. He used his hobby to write to his sister about a specific coin that was no longer being minted. He then continued by describing what his feelings were about this since his business was affected. On his own, economics was being learned by this eighth grader through involvement and role playing. And his interest became a learning experience for his "sibling" at the other school.

At various stages during the activity the teachers involved can send out "letters" to students informing them of various happenings such as the death of a parent, notice of a windfall from a distant relative, being called to help out a family member who has unexpectedly become ill, or receipt of a Christmas or birthday card or present. Unexpected mail adds excitement and an air of suspense and surprise to the project.

As the project neared conclusion, students created embellished timelines, including drawings or magazine cutouts or actual photos of family members. Next year we plan to end the activity with a videotape exchange so that students can find out what their "siblings" look like.

This project requires the teachers to communicate with each other regularly and commit themselves to specific timelines. I and the several very dedicated teachers I worked with chatted about the project, planning upcoming activities and straightening out any problems that arose. The initial phases of the project require teacher interaction to get the ball rolling and continued communication to keep it moving.

Near the end of the school year I always ask students to fill out a survey about the class and the activities we have done. One question I ask is "What was the best part of this year?" Over the past three years, more than 90% of the students enthusiastically endorsed American Families as the best part.

This project lends itself to many areas of the curriculum as well as age groups—I have worked with students as young as 5th grade through high school. Although primarily designed as part of my social studies curriculum, the language arts teacher used it to stress letter writing, grammar, and style. Even the science teacher got into the act, discussing inventions and scientific interests of specific decades, which students referred to in the historical aspect of their letters. One of my students said that the role playing in American Families made her feel like she was a "part of history."

Schools in seven states have participated in the project thus far, and the concept, if not the actual biographical sketches included in the packet, are being adapted for a school in Japan. The possibilities continue to expand. With full motion video as a part of classroom technology, I see the American Families project growing right along with the imagination of students—imagine creating a family album or an animated timeline.

If you are interested in participating in the American Families project, drop me a note. I'd love to hear from you.

Ray Medeiros, Dighton Middle School, 115 Wood St., Somerset, MA 02726.

How Many?

How many lives will it take to make
A perfect world? How many suns
will shine
And moons beam before our hearts
will mend their break
While we wonder when He will send
a sign?
How many candles will burn in the
night
To save our children from the spooky
dark?
Will those adult children overcome
their fright?
What will it take to ignite that
bright spark?
How many sweet dreams will be
awakened
Before they're fulfilled—before it's too
late?
How many times will your dreams be
taken
Before you decide your own precious
fate?
What will it take for us to see the
light?
Will peace be just another oversight?

—*Amber C. Dobbins*

Reprinted with permission from Jordan High School's literary art magazine, **Stylus,** *Volume 18, 1992. Special thanks to Marie Tollstrup and these wonderful poets from her creative writing classes. Jordan High School, 6500 Atlantic Ave., Long Beach, CA 90805.*

—*Reissman (cont. from p. 16)*

On Line Debate

Our citywide bulletin board allowed students to upload their rights revisions and responses to other students, interested users, and law scholars who developed a Rights Network discussion group. Students also used bulletin board AP headlines and research capacities to access relevant constitutional issues in the news and chat about them; they also developed an electronic library on various issues such as The Right To Die, Execution by Injection, Animal Rights, Surrogate Agreements, Gun Control Issues, Obscenity Laws, and Environmental Rights.

Legislative Writing

Finally, students began their own legislative drafting process using current events and neighborhood issues to develop legislative proposals using the standard legislative framing format. This format involves briefly introducing the problem, preceded by "WHEREAS." Once the problem is stated, the solution is introduced, preceded by "BE IT RESOLVED."

In the process of research, debate, and writing, the original U.S. Constitution becomes a living document for these students—a document to be discussed, debated, and redefined. Through the computer and telecommunications, these middle school students actively study and critique their rights as U.S. citizens as they contribute to the ongoing debate.

Rose Reissman, Magnet Specialist District 25, 70-30 164th St., Flushing, NY 11365.

—*Polin (cont. from p. 29)*

called CHRISTENDOM—returning bedraggled, besmirched and dishonored from pirate raids in Kiaochow, Manchuria, South Africa, and the Philippines; with her soul full of meanness, her pocket full of boodle and her mouth full of pious hypocrisies. Give her soap and a towel, but hide the looking-glass."

The Sunday Opinion or Editorial section of most urban newspapers do contain political essays, but rarely do those writings have the flavor of social commentary. Even rarer still is the article that dips into satire to make its point.

Now you try it...

Satire and social commentary are hard to read, let alone write. Get some models to read and discuss before attempting to create your own. Emphasize both satire and commentary. Not everything has to embody wry wit. Discuss the role and responsibility of the essayist.

If your class can handle "A Modest Proposal," by all means do it. It is quintessential political satire. There are easier models such as Dr. Seuss's *The Butter Battle Book*. It is easier to find the humor and the theme in that story since it is not dependent upon knowledge of some specific historical incident, but instead takes on a universal enemy. Find tapes of Mark Russel on PBS. His satire is not particularly strong or witty, but it is obvious. Old episodes of Saturday Night Live, really old episodes, contain sketches that were social commentary.

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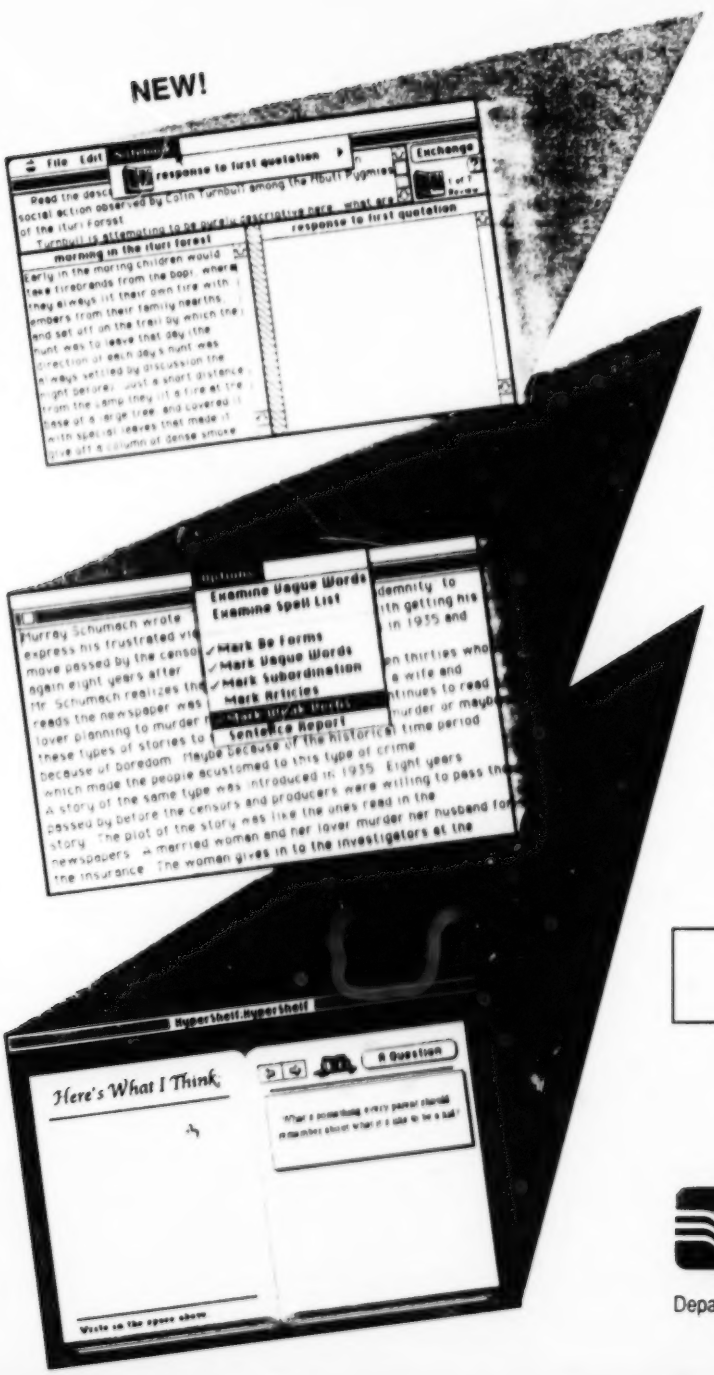

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